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of Ontario



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(Hansard)**

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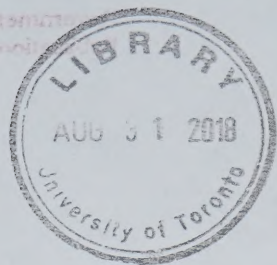
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8 August 2018

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42^e législature

Mercredi
8 août 2018

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker



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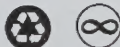
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CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 8 August 2018 / Mercredi 8 août 2018

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Cap and Trade Cancellation Act, 2018, Bill 4, Mr. Phillips / Loi de 2018 annulant le programme de plafonnement et d'échange, projet de loi 4, M. Phillips	
Mr. Jeremy Roberts	661
Mr. Michael Mantha	662
Mrs. Robin Martin	663
Mr. Percy Hatfield	663
Ms. Jane McKenna	663
Mr. Jeremy Roberts	664
Mr. Percy Hatfield	664
Mr. Ross Romano	665
Mr. Jeff Burch	666
Mrs. Belinda Karahalios	666
M. Guy Bourgouin	666
Mr. Percy Hatfield	667
Mr. Deepak Anand	667
Mr. Percy Hatfield	668
Mr. Doug Downey	669
Mr. Guy Bourgouin	669
Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria	669
Mr. Deepak Anand	670
Mr. Gilles Bisson	670
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	671

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

M. Gilles Bisson	671
Hon. Victor Fedeli	671
Mr. Paul Miller	671
Mr. Toby Barrett	671
Mr. Sol Mamakwa	671
Mrs. Amy Fee	671
Mr. Chris Glover	671
Hon. Rod Phillips	672
Hon. Christine Elliott	672
Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell	672
Mr. Roman Baber	672
Ms. Andrea Horwath	672
Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria	672
Mrs. Nina Tangri	672
Ms. Mitzie Hunter	672
Mr. Jeremy Roberts	672

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Social assistance	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	672
Hon. Doug Ford	672
Social assistance	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	673
Hon. Doug Ford	673
Curriculum	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	674
Hon. Doug Ford	674
Hon. Lisa M. Thompson	674
Beverage alcohol sales	
Mr. Mike Harris	675
Hon. Victor Fedeli	675
Social assistance	
Mr. Chris Glover	675
Hon. Lisa MacLeod	675
Beverage alcohol sales	
Ms. Donna Skelly	676
Hon. Todd Smith	676
Beverage alcohol sales	
Mr. John Vanthof	677
Hon. Victor Fedeli	677
Social assistance	
Mr. Michael Coteau	677
Hon. Lisa MacLeod	677
Seniors	
Mrs. Gila Martow	678
Hon. Sylvia Jones	678
Social assistance	
Miss Monique Taylor	678
Hon. Lisa MacLeod	679
Taxation	
Mr. Sheref Sabawy	679
Hon. Caroline Mulroney	679
Mercury poisoning	
Mr. Sol Mamakwa	680
Hon. Greg Rickford	680
Taxation	
Ms. Lindsey Park	680
Hon. Rod Phillips	680
Mr. Peter Tabuns	681
Hon. Steve Clark	681
Mining industry	
Mr. Bill Walker	681
Hon. Greg Rickford	681

Etobicoke Centre nomination

Mr. Taras Natyshak	682
Hon. Steve Clark	682

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

School facilities

Ms. Catherine Fife	682
--------------------------	-----

Social assistance

Mr. Joel Harden	683
-----------------------	-----

George Harvey Crowell

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	683
-------------------------------	-----

Social assistance

Mr. John Fraser	683
-----------------------	-----

Government's record

Ms. Doly Begum	683
----------------------	-----

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

**Waterways Analysis Act, 2018, Bill 20, Mr. Bisson /
Loi de 2018 sur l'analyse des cours d'eau, projet de
loi 20, M. Bisson**

First reading agreed to	685
Mr. Gilles Bisson	685

**Zebra Mussel Study Act, 2018, Bill 21, Mr. Bisson /
Loi de 2018 sur l'étude des moules zébrées, projet
de loi 21, M. Bisson**

First reading agreed to	685
-------------------------------	-----

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

School boards

Mr. Michael Mantha	685
--------------------------	-----

Curriculum

Mr. Joel Harden	686
-----------------------	-----

Municipal elections

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens	686
--------------------------------------	-----

Employment standards

Ms. Sara Singh	686
----------------------	-----

Indigenous affairs

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo	687
---------------------------	-----

Employment standards

Mr. Kevin Yarde	687
-----------------------	-----

Indigenous affairs

Ms. Doly Begum	687
----------------------	-----

Wearing of poppies

Mr. Michael Mantha	688
--------------------------	-----

Social assistance

Ms. Mitzie Hunter	688
-------------------------	-----

Celiac disease

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	688
-------------------------------	-----

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Better Local Government Act, 2018, Bill 5,
**Mr. Clark / Loi de 2018 sur l'amélioration des
administrations locales, projet de loi 5, M. Clark**

Mr. Gilles Bisson	689
Mr. Will Bouma	689
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	689
Mr. David Piccini	690
Mr. Kaleed Rasheed	690
Mr. Jeff Burch	690
Mr. David Piccini	692
Ms. Laura Mae Lindo	695
Mr. Sam Oosterhoff	695
Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens	695
Mr. Logan Kanapathi	696
Mr. David Piccini	696
Mr. Joel Harden	696
Mr. Sheref Sabawy	700
Ms. Doly Begum	700
Mrs. Robin Martin	700
Mr. Gurratan Singh	700
Mr. Joel Harden	701
Mr. Michael Coteau	701
Hon. John Yakabuski	704
Ms. Catherine Fife	704
Ms. Lindsey Park	705
Mr. Gurratan Singh	705
Mr. Michael Coteau	705
Mr. Roman Baber	706
Mr. Faisal Hassan	708
Mr. John Fraser	708
Mrs. Belinda Karahalios	709
Mr. Gurratan Singh	709
Mr. Roman Baber	709
Ms. Catherine Fife	710
Ms. Andrea Khanjin	712
Mr. Kevin Yarde	713
Mrs. Robin Martin	713
Mr. Joel Harden	713
Ms. Catherine Fife	714
Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho	714
Mr. Aris Babikian	715
Ms. Laura Mae Lindo	716
Mr. Doug Downey	717
Mr. Faisal Hassan	717
Mr. Deepak Anand	717
Mr. Aris Babikian	717
Ms. Laura Mae Lindo	718
Mr. David Piccini	720
Mr. Gilles Bisson	721
Hon. Lisa MacLeod	721
Mr. Gurratan Singh	721
Ms. Laura Mae Lindo	722
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	722

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 8 August 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 8 août 2018

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Let us pray.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CAP AND TRADE CANCELLATION ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 ANNULANT LE PROGRAMME DE PLAFONNEMENT ET D'ÉCHANGE

Resuming the debate adjourned on August 7, 2018, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 4, An Act respecting the preparation of a climate change plan, providing for the wind down of the cap and trade program and repealing the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, 2016 / *Projet de loi 4, Loi concernant l'élaboration d'un plan sur le changement climatique, prévoyant la liquidation du programme de plafonnement et d'échange et abrogeant la Loi de 2016 sur l'atténuation du changement climatique et une économie sobre en carbone.*

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Ottawa West—Nepean.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to address Bill 4, the Cap and Trade Cancellation Act.

In 1894, the western world was in the grips of a great environmental and health crisis. It was known at the time as the great horse manure crisis of 1894. You see, in major western cities like London and New York the streets were becoming inundated with heaps upon heaps of horse feces. Some estimates put the amount of dung in these streets at as high as nine feet. For reference, Mr. Speaker, I stand at a poky five foot eight.

This manure was polluting the air and the water and causing panic on the long-term health and environmental implications it would bring to its people. Many of the politicians of the day cried daily for quick government action and intervention. Some called for the taxation of horses. Others demanded stronger manure regulations. Every politician had a solution to this great environmental crisis.

None of these solutions, however, took into account a fundamental truth of the time: Horses were essential to the economic fortune of these societies. They were literally powering humanity forward. This left the world at a seeming impasse, unable to solve this conundrum. In the end, Mr. Speaker, the solution came, unsurprisingly,

not from politicians or policy-makers. The solution came from a man named Henry Ford who in 1908 launched his Model T automobile. In a few short years, horses had almost completely been replaced by automobiles.

The market had stepped in. Mr. Ford found a better, more efficient way to move humanity forward. The value of horses plummeted and so too did their use and their fecal matter. The great horse manure apocalypse had been averted, and politicians didn't have to raise a finger.

Some might wonder why I am sharing this story, Mr. Speaker. How does this little piece of history relate to the bill at hand today?

The story of the great horse manure crisis has played out again and again in the course of human history, and it is playing out again today as humanity faces down the challenges of climate change. Many advocates for more radical environmental policies would have us believe that the solutions to climate change are simple and universally recognized. This is, of course, a fallacy.

You see, Mr. Speaker, the debate over climate change is actually two separate discussions entirely. The first, largely accepted based on available evidence, is that the planet is undergoing a period of climate change. The second, plagued with much more uncertainty, is over the economic impacts of these changes and how to mitigate those. This second debate, for all the ranting and ravings of some, is where uncertainty in the academic and policy community resides.

Like the great horse manure crisis, many politicians and policy-makers claim to have all the answers. The former government, for example, put forward a plan to tax carbon by putting a price on it. This was meant to satisfy the federal government's draconian mandate to provinces that they must tax carbon, a foolish and short-sighted policy. By making carbon-emitting more expensive, the former government hoped that it would reduce our use of fossil fuels.

Unfortunately, this doesn't take into account the tremendously important role that these energy sector companies are playing in moving humanity forward. Like those who wanted to tax the use of horses, it doesn't solve the problem.

The opposition knows this but appears hell-bent on pursuing an irresponsible policy that will hurt everyday Ontarians. Our PC government under Premier Doug Ford knows better. We believe in responsibly targeting our environmental problems with evidence-driven solutions that take into account the important role of the market and the needs of regular people like you and I.

Evidence is at the core of this debate, Mr. Speaker. Time and time again, studies are showing that carbon

pricing will not actually impact emissions anywhere near enough to make an actual marked impact. In fact, some studies have suggested that here in Canada, we would need a carbon price north of \$160 per metric tonne. For reference, BC currently prices it at \$30 per metric tonne; \$160 would represent a 450% increase to even come close to meeting some of the internationally desired levels. Ontarians can't afford this kind of policy.

Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker: This cost is paid for by you and I and everyone else in Ontario. Each of us sees these increases in our gas prices, the cost of heating our homes and the cost of buying everyday goods like groceries. Make no mistake, it is a tax that hurts everyone.

Beyond this, Ontarians understand that carbon taxes like this one hurt our large and small businesses' ability to trade effectively. As competing jurisdictions seek to lower their taxes, in order to become more competitive Ontario cannot be sidelined by government strictures. We need to do everything in our power to make sure that our small businesses can compete on a level playing field so that they can continue to create jobs here at home.

0910

As we all know, small business is the number one job creator here in this province. As Premier Ford has said on many occasions, we here in the PC Party are committed to ensuring that Ontario is open for business. Moreover, Ontarians know that the revenues earned from these carbon taxes are simply being used by irresponsible governments to spend more money that we can't afford—a favourite policy prescription of the opposition.

If the debt left behind by the previous administration is anything to go by, it's no wonder they were desperate to take in more of our cash by any means necessary. We believe that governments shouldn't force taxpayers to bail them out of their failed policies. Instead, we believe in making the prudent and responsible decisions needed to get our finances back in order without hurting consumers.

So let's recap: This carbon pricing policy doesn't solve the problem, takes more money from our pockets and hurts our ability to trade competitively. Sounds like a lose-lose-lose to me. So why pursue this policy? Philip Cross of the Macdonald-Laurier Institute has a theory. He has suggested that governments are pursuing these policies as a feel-good measure. In fact, he went as far as to say that carbon taxes are the "equivalent of buying a papal indulgence to alleviate our collective conscience with a largely symbolic gesture...."

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not good enough for this government.

Through this bill, we are introducing legislation to wind down Ontario's cap-and-trade system and move us out of this failed enterprise. It's the responsible thing to do. By doing this, we are going to return money back into the pockets of hard-working Ontario families. In fact, it's expected that the average Ontario family will save, on average, \$260 per year. This, on top of an average saving at the gas pumps of 10 cents a litre.

Having travelled around my great riding of Ottawa West—Nepean, I met hundreds of people who shared their stories with me of how life was getting more unaffordable. As we promised in the election, we are taking quick action to solve that problem. We're making sure that we're lowering the cost of government. That's extra money that a family can use to put a bit more food on the table, take their kids to summer camp or spend an afternoon with Grandma and Grandpa. Promise made, promise kept.

This government will never introduce symbolic virtue-signalling policies that accomplish little and make life more unaffordable for Ontarians. We will fight for the people. Instead, we will work hand in hand with industry partners to develop collaborative, market-driven strategies that will solve the important environmental challenges facing us today, and these will be evidence-based solutions.

We don't have to look far. All around us, innovation is flourishing. In Australia and next door in Saskatchewan, pioneering research into carbon capture technology is presenting one path forward to responsibly develop our natural resources. Companies are leading the charge. Elsewhere, visionary inventors like Elon Musk at Tesla are pushing the boundaries on new technologies such as new solar batteries that will solve the problems of energy storage and make solar power a viable, efficient and affordable alternative to other energy sources.

The world around us is abuzz with ideas; from the labs of Waterloo to the tech centres of west Ottawa, our bright and resilient people are working to find that next frontier. So let's not move backwards, Mr. Speaker. Let's keep our eye ever focused on the future.

In the words of Henry Ford, "If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Are you sharing? You didn't say.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I'm splitting my time with—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): No. We have to move to questions and comments.

I recognize the member from Algoma—Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I was listening very closely to the opening statement the member from Ottawa West—Nepean was giving us. I almost feel like walking over there and giving him a shovel because a lot of what I heard smelled and sounded like horse manure.

If we're going to be doing something here in Ontario, and if they are claiming to be the party of small business, then I've got a couple of questions for them. What about Wikwemikong First Nation? What about Dubois Construction up in Elliot Lake? What about the many other small businesses that are being affected? What about the investments that they've made into their business to go out and seek the training, make the investments, create jobs and do the orders through manufacturing windows, insulation, roofing and all of those other opportunities

and spinoff jobs? What about the marketing plan that Wikwemikong had prepared in order to sell their pelletization plant and to mass produce wood pellets across northern Ontario? What about those jobs? What about those individuals? Don't they matter? Aren't they small businesses? Aren't they the backbone of Ontario?

I heard some of his statements. In this wind-down of cap-and-trade, I can almost assure you, Speaker—and you would probably know this—with the reduction in gas prices, how long do you think it's going to take big business friends, oil companies, to move in on the reduction of that 10 cents? How long do you think it's going to take them to come in and swallow up that profit margin? I don't think it's going to be very long.

This is a wrong-headed direction that this government is taking in our province, and they are eliminating a lot of jobs in Ontario. If they are going to say that they're the party of small business, prove it and show it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing along, further questions and comments?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I want to say thank you to my friend from Ottawa West–Nepean. I thought that was a brilliant presentation. I really enjoyed it. I really think the use of a story, especially one that actually happened in history, to emphasize what's happening and what's going on, was brilliant and cut through some of the noise around these issues to show us what we're really talking about. I thought it was brilliant—graphic in some ways, but very good.

I agree with my friend that, frankly, we know from historical examples that this kind of reaction is just a little bit of running around saying, “The sky is falling. The sky is falling.” The sky is not falling. Solutions for environmental problems, by and large, throughout history, have come from businesses who are not held back, who are allowed to innovate. They come up with the solutions. I think it is the height of human hubris to think that we here have the answers to all the questions, just like the politicians in the days before Henry Ford thought that they had the answers, and yet the solution came from business. I really enjoyed that presentation.

I do feel like now we are kind of piling up manure, if you will, on this front. A lot of people are saying a lot of things that just have no bearing on reality. I thought your presentation very much brought us back to reality. I think we can take from this story where we should be going, which is to let businesses succeed in innovating to help us get out of the climate issues that we find ourselves in. That is what this government will do. I thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I've only been here for five years, but I must say, I've never heard so much horse manure, talk about manure, in my five years of being here.

I want to thank the member for Ottawa West–Nepean for trying, in his way, to draw a linkage between Henry Ford and Premier Ford—although, again, that is a bit of a

stretch there, a bit of manure scent to raise the flowers on that one.

0920

Henry Ford, as you know, came up with a more efficient way of transportation. We're still waiting to see what method the Ford plan, the Premier's plan, will be to replace the flawed Liberal cap-and-trade plan to fight air pollution and greenhouse gases. I heard the member say that they don't have all the answers; I agree, but we'd like to see some of the answers. We'd like to know what plan, what cost, what targets are going to be set, how the targets are changed, and what evidence is going to be used.

The member for Ottawa West–Nepean said that Premier Ford had a better idea. Well, what idea? You would think his job one would be transparency, but we don't know what the plan is, just like we didn't know—five million people in Ontario did not know—during the election campaign that, if elected, Premier Ford was going to tamper with and hinder their municipal elections. Five million people—nobody was up front with them. Nobody told them, “When we're elected, we're going to impact your municipal campaigns.” Five million people, more than a third of the entire population of the province, were kept in the dark that the Conservatives were going to impact the municipal election. That's not transparency.

This Conservative plan is not transparent; it's horse manure.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.

Further questions and comments?

Ms. Jane McKenna: I'd also like to reiterate what the member from Eglinton–Lawrence said about how there's nothing like a storytelling person, the member from Ottawa West–Nepean, bringing the whole story back to what the reality is here in Ontario. So thank you so much for your speech.

I'm delighted to stand here today to speak briefly in support of the government's Cap and Trade Cancellation Act. The legislation will end the practice of overpaying for fuel to drive our cars and natural gas to heat our homes. It will eliminate the unfair and regressive tax that made life more unaffordable for middle- and lower-income Ontarians. It is anticipated, but I'll reiterate it again, that Ontario households will save approximately \$260 annually. In addition, the orderly rollback of cap-and-trade is an important first step in bringing gas prices down. We promised a gas price reduction of 10 cents per litre, and we are planning to keep that promise. Promise made, promise kept.

This is great news for Ontario, Speaker. This legislation will also reduce the tax burden on businesses. We want to help businesses grow, create jobs and compete in the global economy. In fact, we anticipate the creation of an estimated 14,000 jobs.

The Cap and Trade Cancellation Act will also set regulations for a compensation framework through which the government will be offering some support to eligible participants in the cap-and-trade program. Specifically, we want to minimize the cost impact to companies that have purchased emissions allowances but not yet passed the costs on to consumers. This is the right thing to do.

I'm pleased to see that the proposed legislation requires government to prepare and publish a climate change plan and to set targets for reducing the amount of greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario. We will be developing a new plan in the weeks ahead that will address Ontario's significant environmental priorities. Stay tuned, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now we return to the member from Ottawa West—Nepean for final comments.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I would like to thank the member for Eglinton—Lawrence and the member from Burlington for their comments. That was very kind and I look forward to sharing many other stories in the years ahead.

To the members opposite, I would simply say that I am proud to be down in the muck getting things done while they pursue pie-in-the-sky policies that are so far detached from reality.

This policy of cap-and-trade that the former government introduced seems part of a long history of theirs of introducing symbolic environmental policies that don't really take into account everyday Ontarians. For example, let's take a look at their disastrous hydro plan. They went forward in building all of these renewable sources of energy here in Ontario while just across the river from my riding, in Quebec, there is a large source of clean, emissions-free energy in hydro power that they're currently selling to the New England states at a fraction of the cost that we're paying.

Mr. Speaker, I have no problems with renewable energy. Renewable energy has tremendous potential to help us move forward in the right environment. But there is no reason whatsoever to build those sources of energy here in Ontario when we have a cheaper, more affordable and equally clean power source across the river. The only thing that it served to accomplish was to increase hydro rates on Ontario families, just like this cap-and-trade policy has increased taxes on Ontario families. Our PC government, is going to work hard to make sure that we're making life more affordable for every single Ontarian, because that's what we were elected for. Promises made, promises kept.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member from Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. Again, it's a pleasure and an honour to be called upon by you to stand in this House and to speak on behalf of the good people of my riding of Windsor—Tecumseh.

Bill 4, the Cap and Trade Cancellation Act, comes as no surprise. It was something the Conservatives cam-

paigned on—unlike the out-of-the-blue, let's-cut-Toronto-city-council-in-half bill, which was never mentioned during the Ford Conservative campaign by any of their candidates or their leader. It was one of those hidden surprises we're just now learning about, the hidden agenda tucked up the Premier's sleeve, the magician just waiting for the chance to pull out his little rabbits, to the delight of his friends and supporters.

What also comes as a surprise, and not a pleasant one to the business community, is that Bill 4 is structured in such a way as to prevent them from recovering the investments they've already made. It also restricts them from going to the courts to seek damages against the Ford Conservatives.

Speaker, just for the sake of argument, reverse the table-setting here for a moment. If a New Democratic government brought out legislation such as this, tearing up contracts, passing laws that you couldn't sue us for doing so, we'd be called communist or something. But here, it's a pro-business government, supposedly, waging war on corporations that follow the rules and invest in ways to eliminate global warming: contracts ripped up; investors told, "Tough luck" and "Don't waste your time going to a judge and crying about it because we've covered our backsides and we've put a clause in here that says, 'Uh-uh, sorry about your luck, but you can't do that.' Too bad, so sad, now move along folks. There's nothing to see here. No crime has been committed. It's the law of the land. There's a new sheriff in town. Get out of Dodge. It's a Ford Nation. Now we have a majority; we'll do what we want. We can break promises about keeping the experiment on the basic income project and roll back a planned increase to people who are on disability support and general assistance because we hold the most seats in this House. Yes, our campaign for the people did not include the people who need our help the most. The little people in Ford Nation are out of luck. Too bad, so sad."

Speaker, I wish I had a dollar for every time I've heard someone in this House say, "For the people."

Interjections: For the people.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you. I'd have enough money to buy a round of government-subsidized loonie beer down at my local Legion hall, Branch 255, in Olde Riverside.

There is such a thing as copyright infringement. I mention this as there is a used car dealership in my riding—and you know it, Speaker—at Tecumseh and Jefferson. It's been there for way more than 10 years, on Tecumseh Road at Jefferson. The signs have been up for years: "Donny for the People." That's right. Donny Rezoski sells used cars. "For the People" has been his slogan for 10 years or more. So I cringe when I hear my PC friends who were elected just a couple of months ago using Donny's well-established and well-known slogan.

I trust Donny. I'd buy a used car from Donny. I'm not so sure I'd buy a used car from a Premier who has adopted Donny's slogan instead of dreaming up an original one of his own.

0930

Words matter. Promises matter. Being crystal clear with the voters while campaigning matters. That's why it scares me to think of buying a used car from a Premier who wasn't crystal clear about cutting the size of Toronto city council in half or preventing people in Peel region and York and Muskoka and Niagara from electing a chair of their regional government. This was campaign by stealth. Nobody was up front about this. Nobody went door to door saying this was what they were going to do. Would you buy a used car from someone who hid the facts, who wasn't up front with you, the people? The Premier wasn't for the people in this case.

Early on, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services challenged the opposition; she asked, "Are you with us or against us?" Speaker, are the Conservatives with the people or against the people? They're certainly not for all the people in Ontario.

When it comes to this bill kneecapping the cap-and-trade legislation, they were up front with us. They campaigned on it. They were very proud of it. So I guess they weren't so proud of some of the rest of their early-days agenda—not a word from any of them on the doorstep about ending the guaranteed income experiment, not a word about not providing the poorest of the poor with a budgeted 3% increase, not a word about cutting the number of municipal candidates at Toronto city hall in half. There's nothing to be proud of there—no process to follow.

This is all about process. This is all about credibility. Who would you trust when it comes to buying a used car: the salesperson who is up front with you, or the one with page after page of small print, too small to mention during the sales pitch, too small to put into the campaign literature? We learn by our mistakes, but it is so hard to regain someone's trust after you've blindsided them big time.

Inquiring minds want to know: What is the Ford plan to replace this bill? They say they'll set targets to lower greenhouse gases, but they've already fired Ontario's chief scientist. Who will they consult with on their new targets? How much will their plan cost the people of Ontario, how much in legal fees, as they fight the federal government? How will the minister report to this House and to the people in this province on his success or lack thereof on meeting these invisible targets? What rationale will he use to amend his targets when he fails to meet them? What's the plan? Where is the plan? Much like a real platform the Premier ran on, it doesn't exist.

Peter Pan lived in Neverland and he and Wendy and Tinker Bell had pixie dust to spread around and create a bit of magic. We're still waiting for the pixie dust here. Where's the beef?

Just like the used car salespeople, they say, "Trust us. We wouldn't sell you anything we wouldn't buy ourselves." But they're not Donny Rezoski, whose used car slogan has been "For the People" for the past 10 years. They haven't earned our trust because of their broken promises and their campaign by stealth, this bait-and-switch early-days agenda.

Speaker, five million people weren't told that their municipal elections would be impacted if they voted for the Conservatives—five million when you add up the population in Toronto, in Peel, in York, in Muskoka and in Niagara; five million people out of a population of about 13 million and a bit. It boggles the mind how you can say, "We're for the people," when you don't let the people know what your agenda is, when you hide the facts from the people of Ontario. How can you expect to earn credibility with the people who didn't know what they were voting for? Is there a do-over? The people who voted for the Conservative Party the last time, more than a third of the people in Ontario, did not know what they were voting for. They liked the slogan, "For the People," but they didn't know that the people were being kept in the dark. A third of the people in Ontario did not know that their municipal elections would be impacted, that they would lose their democratic right to elect as many councillors in Toronto as they saw fit that they needed to do—and as the regional chairs.

The last Liberal government consulted; we had public hearings. I was there on the committee when people came in and told us what they wanted. The decision was made and, God bless me, the Conservatives voted in favour of having elected regional chairs. That was just a few short months ago. During the campaign, you didn't hear a word about not keeping their promise, not standing up for the votes they just cast. They didn't go to the people. Even though the slogan was "For the People," they didn't go to the same people and say, "By the way, just wait until we get in. Boy, have we got a surprise for you. We've got a couple of rabbits up our sleeve."

You know, Speaker, this is not the right thing to do. It's not the right way to start off a new government. It's not the right way to say to the people of Ontario, "Trust us." Because right now, trust is shattered. The people who were on the basic income project—every time they say "Promise made, promise kept," this is an ice pick in the eye, this is a stab in the heart. Their promise was not kept; their promise was broken. The Premier said during the campaign that he would keep the experiment. The minister liked it. All of a sudden, they don't.

So they're not for the people. They may say they're for the people. Don't buy a used car from this crowd. This crowd has got small print. This crowd are not to be trusted because they kept us in the dark about all the impacts they're having on this province. I'm not doom and gloom, I'm not a scaremonger, but it's going to get a lot worse before the tide turns and it gets any better.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ross Romano: In the short time I have I want to respond to some of the comments made by the member opposite. I want to thank him for his comments.

Starting off, cap-and-trade, Bill 4: There is no doubt that the people of Ontario do not want a carbon tax; they do not want to see cap-and-trade. It is clear from the results of the election and it's clear based on common sense—simple common sense.

When the idea of the Green Energy Act and taxing carbon and all of that area was proposed, we in Ontario produced more power than we used—we produced more than we used. In theory, the idea was not all that bad, but the problem was that when Justin Trudeau said, “All right, provinces, we’re going to have a carbon tax”—it wasn’t up to all of the Premiers across this country to say, “All right, you said, ‘Jump,’ we’re going to say, ‘How high?’” That’s not the way democracy works in this country. It was up to the Premiers of the province to look at things and say, “How are we, in our respective governments within each jurisdiction, going to implement a carbon tax that meets the federal standards?”—if that was the process they were going to follow—or, “How can we do it in an effective and efficient way?”

Cap-and-trade was not effective or efficient, and it did not help us be competitive in this province. Something better was called for, and that is precisely what we are doing. We received that mandate.

Now, in my last 10 seconds, I want to say this: Just because you have an election promise to get rid of cap-and-trade and you don’t have a promise to get rid of councillors doesn’t mean that you’re not working for the people. In fact, the people are clearly demonstrating they support what we are doing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Burch: This is clearly a government with absolutely no plan. They have no environmental policy. They didn’t have an environmental policy during the election; they don’t have an environmental policy now. They never had one. How can you be a government of the largest province in Canada and not have an environmental policy, an environmental plan?

Mr. Lorne Coe: We have a plan.

Mr. Jeff Burch: There is no plan. There is no environmental plan.

You have climate change, you have forest fires out of control, you have problems all over the world—and you have a government with no environmental plan. It’s absolutely ridiculous. The only plan they do have is to get rid of a former government’s plan, and to go to court and cost taxpayers \$30 million, Mr. Speaker, in a wasted lawsuit. That’s the plan: to waste \$30 million. What kind of an environmental plan is that?

This government and this party, who are supposed to be for small business—there are small businesses all over the province, there are small businesses in Niagara, windows and doors, construction businesses, that have hired employees, that have expended money, and now they’ve had to cancel their contracts, they’ve had to lay off employees. What kind of a small business party is this?

0940

Talk to the chamber of commerce: There are thousands of businesses all over Ontario that have had to lay off employees because this government has cancelled contracts that people have gone into in good faith through the green program. If this government was responsible,

what they would have done is honour those contracts first, and then cancel the program. But instead you’ve left small businesses out in the dark.

This is not a party of small business. It’s a party of broken promises.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: It is a pleasure to speak here again this morning. Thank you to my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie and the members opposite for your comments.

“No plan”—I had to chuckle when I heard you say that, simply because I suspect the only plan that the NDP would support would be a plan that includes increased taxes, or more taxes—because tax is your game.

And you speak about small businesses and the chamber of commerce; when I went out, I spoke with my local chamber of commerce, I spoke with businesses who are part of that chamber of commerce. A lot of them were afraid of what would have happened on June 7 if the members opposite had won, because they did not feel supported by their plan.

The PC government that was formed on June 7 supports the small business community. We keep our promises for the people and we support promises for the people—

Interjections.

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: Excuse me.

We kept our promises regarding scrapping the cap-and-trade, reducing the gas prices, helping our small business community. We trust our small business community.

By adding the cap-and-trade, all we’ve done is ask the business community to take away money that they’ve taken in, that they’ve brought in—money that they would have used to add to their green initiatives. We were asking them to give that to the government instead. We were not supporting our small businesses with the cap-and-trade.

So, to the member opposite: If you’re so interested in helping small business, maybe you should vote for Bill 4 because what it’s going to do is help our small business community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this time to speak.

Again: promise made, promise kept. I’m very proud to be part of this government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Ça me fait toujours un plaisir de me lever pour parler, aussi, pour ma circonscription de Mushkegowuk—Baie James.

Mon confrère de Windsor—Tecumseh, je pense qu’il a tapé la tête du clou avec son marteau, parce que je pense que quand on parle de transparence, de confiance et puis de crédibilité—je ne suis pas sûr qu’on peut dire ça du gouvernement dans ce point ici.

J’ai parlé avec du monde dans ma circonscription à propos de la cancellation du « cap-and-trade. » Ils me disent, « Guy, sans que la poussière commence à tomber,

on réalise qu'on a perdu beaucoup de choses. On dit beaucoup de choses. » J'ai dit, « Qu'est-ce que tu veux dire? » « Bien, écoute, moi, j'ai acheté une voiture qui était à moitié électrique, et puis aujourd'hui, il n'y a plus de subvention pour ça. » Je lui ai dit, « C'est en plein ça. »

Durant ma campagne, j'ai été dans une école où il n'y avait rien qu'une classe qui avait l'air conditionné. Les 100 millions que vous avez coupés—et puis, on se pète les bretelles : « Il faut protéger les étudiants. » C'est drôle que vous ne vous les pêtez pas aujourd'hui. Pourquoi? Vous avez annulé les 100 millions qui affectaient toutes les écoles dans les circonscriptions qui avaient besoin de ces rénovations-là. On ne vous a pas entendu parler pour les élèves dans ce cas-ci; mais seulement quand c'est venu à la grève, pour éroder les droits des travailleurs.

On dit, « un gouvernement pour le peuple. » Un gouvernement du peuple, c'est de la transparence. La transparence, dans ce cas, je ne suis pas sûr qu'il y en a, parce qu'on peut voir que le plan—on ne l'a pas vu encore, votre plan. On aimerait bien le voir pour être capable de le critiquer encore plus, mais comme c'est maintenant, on ne l'a pas vu encore.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now I return to the member from Windsor—Tecumseh for final comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: To my friend from Sault Ste. Marie saying people didn't want a carbon tax—I didn't know it was a tax, but if he says so—I wasn't trying to defend the Liberal plan; I think it was flawed. But what is your plan? How much is it going to cost? What are the targets you're going to set? We don't know.

I wrote down a quote that you used: “not the way democracy works.” Democracy works when you tell the people up front what you're going to do. In this case, you said that you're going to get rid of this plan. I agree with that. But all the other stuff you're doing that you weren't transparent about, how you didn't tell five million people that you were going to impact their municipal elections—that's not how democracy is supposed to work.

My friend from Niagara Centre said that you guys don't have an environmental plan. I heard one of the ministers in the front row—I won't say which one—say, “We had a plan: to win.” And that's okay. You won. Congratulations, you won. But you did it by stealth; you did it by a hidden agenda; you did it without telling five million people in Ontario that you were going to impact their municipal elections—you didn't do that.

You've been breaking promises. You're breaking promises to the poorest of the poor in Ontario on the guaranteed Basic Income Pilot project. You're not giving the poorest of the poor a 3% raise.

The member from Cambridge said that she talked to the small business community. You didn't tell them you were going to rip up contracts. You didn't tell them you were going to pass laws that say, “You can't sue us. Ha ha, we've covered our backsides. You can't sue us when we rip—and you're not going to get a penny back on

your investments.” You did not tell the people in the small business community in Cambridge any of that.

My friend from Mushkegowuk—James Bay said that it's about trust and credibility. It's all about trust and credibility. When you do what you've done with your hidden agenda, you've lost your trust, you've lost your credibility; and when you've lost it, it will take forever to get it back.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Deepak Anand: It's been a pleasure listening to everybody on Bill 4. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to discuss Bill 4 as well, an act to prepare for a solid climate change plan, providing for the wind-down of the cap-and-trade program and repealing the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act of 2016.

Just a few short weeks ago, our government was given a clear mandate to put people first and make life more affordable for Ontario families. I'm glad to announce again that Ontario's carbon tax era is over and the conclusion of cap-and-trade is a key step toward fulfilling the government's commitment to reduce gas prices by 10 cents. That's making life more affordable, but the benefits don't stop here.

In addition to saving families money, the elimination of the cap-and-trade carbon tax will remove a cost burden from Ontario businesses. It will allow them to grow, create jobs and compete with global competition. We're looking forward to our slogan, “For the businesses.”

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It isn't, “For the people”?

Mr. Deepak Anand: We are for the people as well, but we want to tell them that we're open for business.

Cap-and-trade took effect on July 1. The regulation was intended to set an overall legal limit on greenhouse gas emissions in a certain time period. It provided incentives to purchase electric zero-emission vehicles. But it also created another government burden, and that increased the cost of living in Ontario.

Our job in the House is very simple. It is to make the lives of our constituents easier and affordable.

The cap-and-trade regulation was an expensive program. We already know it only produced 20% results. A simple question we asked: “What on earth?” There's a program, and we know it's not working—just producing 20% results. Before installing the regulation, the previous government knew that it would inevitably increase the price of goods and services across Ontario. A complicated program that was neither transparent nor revenue neutral, it gathered billions of dollars and was an opportunity for the previous government to dispense free allowances and provide more capital to their projects and, more often, their favourite projects.

0950

The government of Ontario can still provide incentives to reduce greenhouse emissions without imposing another tax. In practice, the regulation did not achieve a more equitable and sustainable economy. Instead, it was leading to higher prices and more taxes, and we all know about it.

The cap-and-trade system encourages short-term solutions—it's a bandage—while delaying fundamental problems, and the fundamental problems are what we need to take care of. This broken regulation is a short-term cash grab and does not translate into an environmentally effective outcome over a long period. I look forward to brainstorming with my fellow colleagues on both sides, making sure we end the regime of this regressive tax.

We also believe that climate change is a very important issue. It's something we will never take lightly. Once passed, the Cap and Trade Cancellation Act will repeal the cap-and-trade legislation, extinguish allowances, protect taxpayers from further costs and set out regulation-making authority for a compensation framework.

We are determined to find alternate solutions, moving forward, for a cleaner future. We believe green energy will arise in Ontario without the expense of the taxpayer. I'd like to add here: As a chemical engineer, I am passionate about a better environment, better than what we inherited. I am committed to working with the ministry to find sustainable solutions. I believe that together we will find effective and progressive methods of ensuring the health and safety of our delicate environment. We are not against the environment.

Ontario is a world leader in innovative technology. If we talk about Ontario's clean-tech companies, we are number one. We have companies that are helping organizations and communities around the world, not just in Ontario, providing them with efficient solutions to tough environmental challenges. From mitigating the impacts of climate change to delivering clean energy and clean drinking water, Ontario's clean-tech industry is at the forefront of sustainable development.

Talking about sustainable development, I'd like to mention and thank the member from Ottawa West-Nepean, who talked about sustainable innovations. That's what we're talking about in Ontario with our government.

I want to share with you some of the leading clean-tech companies in Ontario. Silfab Solar is a Mississauga-based company that produce high-efficiency photo-electric modular cells for solar power generation. Pond Technologies in Markham is a venture-based company that utilizes microalgae to convert carbon dioxide emissions of major industrial emitters into biofuel through the process of photosynthesis, and ultimately, into bio-oil and biodiesel. This is how we're taking care of the environment.

Another example is Aslan Technologies. It is a Burlington-based design and manufacturing company serving the chemical, water and waste water treatment industries. The president of Aslan has referred to Ontario as the "Silicon Valley" of water technology.

Clearly, Ontario has set the bar and we will continue to work for innovative ventures.

A recent poll in February indicates that 70% of Ontarians think taking action to solve climate change is a high priority, and it is one of our priorities to ensure the

long-term prosperity of this great province, but without damaging our economy, without burning the people of Ontario. We are moving forward with the wind-down of the cap-and-trade program and repealing the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act of 2016. We will—and we promise—deliver real action on reducing emissions, cleaning our streets and conservation, while providing clean air and water.

We promised to relieve families from undue hardship, and our government was given a clear objective to put the people first. Once passed, we all know Bill 4 will save families an average of \$260 per year, including cheaper gas prices and lower energy bills. We've all heard it many, many times, but I'd like to echo it one more time, Mr. Speaker. We made this promise to the people of Ontario—promise made, promise kept.

Not only this, Mr. Speaker, Ontario is estimated to create 14,000 jobs, and I'm glad to say that Ontario is back in business. We are one step closer to fulfilling our commitment to the people of Ontario. Our mission to stimulate the economy starts now and here.

I'd like to thank the Minister of the Environment, Rod Phillips, who has worked tirelessly on this historic bill. Not only him—everyone in our caucus is proud of our government, and proud of what we're doing right now. Moving forward, Ontario will be more competitive and stronger than ever.

Together, I believe that we'll find a better solution for a better environment rather than taxing the consumer through control and discipline. As Canadians, it is vital we take advantage of our resources while constantly innovating. This is an important issue to address and that's why we're making it a priority today. It is our commitment to put into place a more effective plan—a plan to address the environmental challenges we face while respecting the taxpayer.

I look forward to working with my fellow members to address these issues and come up with valuable solutions.

And I'd like to add here, Mr. Speaker, that ever since we started to come back to the House, every time I go to meet people over the weekend, they are appreciating what we're doing. They're actually asking how quickly we can do it. And they're amazed by how quickly we've done it.

I believe we are on the right track. We promised the people of Ontario that we're going to make life more affordable and that's what we're doing. Promise made, promise kept—and soon, we're going to call it promise made, promise kept, promise delivered.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: As I say, every time I hear "promise made, promise kept," the poorest of the poor in Ontario feel it in their heart, feel it in their eyes. And promise made, promise broken when it comes to the experiment on the basic income social services project and when it comes to an expected 3% increase being rolled back to 1.5%. Every time you say it, you are telling the poorest of the poor in Ontario, "Whoops, we don't mean you. We're talking about our rich friends."

Look, climate change is real, as the member said. Last night in Toronto, the power was out for a couple of hours and torrential rains hit. You can't put up with this unless you have a real plan for protecting the environment. Stripping away the Liberal plan is one thing; it was a flawed plan. But what is your plan? Be transparent about it. What is going to be the cost? What are the targets you're going to set? How are you going to adjust those targets? Who are the scientists who are going to advise you on this plan? You've already fired Ontario's chief scientist.

I heard another slogan. I heard "For the People" and now I'm hearing "For the Business." But you don't go to the business community and say, "We're going to tear up contracts. We're going to pass legislation that allows us to tear up contracts, and when we tear up these contracts, we're going to have other clauses in there that say you can't sue us. You're not going to get your money back, because we're for the people, except not for the business people whose contracts we tear up, and not for the business people who can't recover their costs because we put a clause in there that says, 'Too bad, so sad, you're not going to get your money back.' All you did was follow Ontario's laws, but we're changing the laws."

You didn't tell the people when you said you're going to get rid of cap-and-trade, "We're going to rip up the contracts that are there now and not give you a dime for your investment." Five million people didn't know you were going to impact their municipal elections. You're not transparent.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Doug Downey: Thank you to the member from Mississauga-Malton.

I guess to work in reverse on who is going to advise and where are these smart people we're going to find, you're sitting right beside a chemical engineer with an MBA from Schulich. That's a good place to start. We have such talent on the government side of this House, in the government ranks. There are some really smart people who have thought about how things work.

The people do feel it. They physically feel what we're doing when we're cancelling the carbon tax—they're feeling the weight off their shoulders—because the carbon tax is simply a gathering of money with no purpose. It was going into a pot and it was being a slush fund for the former government, propped up by the opposition. It is really unfortunate that people equate the taking of money out of the economy with actually doing something. It's motion without action. It's not helpful. It's oppressive to our system, and we heard this from businesses.

1000

I didn't just talk to members of the chamber of commerce; I used to be the president of a chamber of commerce and so I know how the small businesses are struggling. They're knocking at our doors saying, "You need to help us. I'm on the edge." People don't understand how on the edge some companies are, and this tax,

which is money out of their pocket—which is money out of the pocket of consumers, because they have to pass it on; they have families to feed, themselves.

I'm sure the member from Mississauga-Malton is hearing the same things at the doors. He has several significant companies, both large and small, mom-and-pop companies and multinationals, and they're all saying the same thing: "Taxing me and putting it into a pot as a slush fund is not helping anybody. It's oppressive."

So, Mr. Speaker, I don't know how the NDP reconciled propping up the Liberals at the time with that and then condemning us for getting us back on the right track. I'd be interested in their ideas on this, but we'll hear more later.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Climate change is real. You should come and visit my communities up north. Katchewan, these First Nations communities, every spring—it used to be occasional but now it's every spring—have to be uprooted from their communities. They're scattered. They come to Kapuskasing and they go into different communities. We were there, with my colleague Gilles Bisson, and they asked us directly, "Would you come and live here? Would you bring your family to my community?" And we had to be honest. We had to say, "No, because it's unsafe."

It's unsafe because climate change is here. It affects us. We can say, "Oh, the tax, the tax," but what's your plan? These people want to know what your plan is—and so do we—because they're affected directly.

Interjection.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: They may have voted—no, I don't think they voted for you because I'm standing right here, okay?

The reality is they have to be dislodged from their communities year after year, which is unfair. Bring us a plan. They need transparency. We want to see your plan, because forest fires and flooding exist—and I can tell you, in my riding, more, ever since climate change has been increasing. We can say, "Oh, the tax, the tax," but the reality is, it hits the people. We need to see the plan and you need to be transparent on it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I want to thank my colleague from Mississauga-Malton for his comments.

Let's be clear once again. We know climate change exists. No one denies it. We know it's here. But the solution to every problem is not to tax. We made a promise to the people when we were campaigning, when we were knocking on doors, to make life more affordable. When I was knocking on doors in Brampton South, that was one of the main concerns. People cannot afford life, the day-to-day activities—the single mothers, the hard-working mothers and fathers who are just trying to put their kids through school. That's why our government made a commitment, a promise to scrap the carbon tax, and that's exactly what we did. We're delivering relief to the

hard-working families of Ontario: some \$260 back in their pockets so they can take their kids out to dinner; they can go out and watch some movies with their families. That's exactly what this government has been doing.

We called back this Legislature just so we could get back to work. We rolled up our sleeves and we put the taxpayers first. We made sure that we run an efficient and effective government because, for the last 15 years, there's been so much mismanagement, so many scandals, and the taxpayers have been left without anything.

When I was knocking on doors, one of the things that I heard the most was that there is absolutely no faith left in our public institutions. That's exactly what we have focused on: restoring that faith for those individuals who are working hard, who are paying their tax dollars, ensuring that they get their fair share and that we, as a government, respect the money that they are putting into our hands.

I want to thank the member once again and—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Back to the member from Mississauga—Malton for final comments.

Mr. Deepak Anand: First of all, I'd like to thank the member from Barrie for the wonderful comments. Thank you, members opposite, from Windsor—Tecumseh and the member from James Bay—and my neighbour is always with me. Thank you for that. Thank you to the member from Brampton South, my neighbour.

All of us are saying exactly the same thing. We're not saying anything different. We're talking about helping out the people, helping the economy—

Mr. Bill Walker: For the people.

Mr. Deepak Anand: For the people.

Mr. Speaker, our government was elected on a very simple promise: to be for the people. That's what we're doing. During our campaign, during our election time and even after the election, one question kept coming to me, and I'm pretty sure it was coming to all of us. People were asking, "How are you going to put people first? How are you going to make life more affordable for me and my family?"

We do understand the challenges that climate change presents, but a regressive tax is not the solution. The people of my riding and the people of Ontario have made it clear to me and to all of us that they don't want an unfair tax that puts the burden on their families and small business.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk about a vicious cycle. What's happening is, once we put a tax on somebody, we create more burden on them. The cost of living goes up. The cost of producing goods goes up. What happens is, people can't afford it. Once they can't afford it, they cannot do—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm going to start my time in this debate, and unfortunately, we're going to run out of time and we'll have to continue later.

I just want to start out with a basic debunking of the myth the government's trying to create around cap-and-trade. They're arguing that this is strictly a carbon tax, and there's nothing that could be stranger or further from the truth. There are two different systems. There is a carbon tax, which two of our provinces currently do, and the federal government is interested in doing—which I think, on all sides of the House, we don't support. We don't think a carbon tax is the way to go because a carbon tax means it's the public that's going to pay. If you have a carbon tax, that means you and I and our neighbours are going to pay more for everything in order to raise money to have programs to allow for the mitigation of pollution. That's one way to do it and that's not the way we want to go.

The alternate is the cap-and-trade system. The cap-and-trade system, simply put, says that those who pollute will pay, and the money we raise from those who are polluting will then be given to those people who are trying to reduce carbon emissions into the atmosphere or into the water. That could be, in the case of an individual homeowner, replacing your windows, putting in a new furnace, insulating your house. It may be any of those things. If you're a manufacturer or a small company of some type, it might be investing in technology that reduces your emissions into the atmosphere.

So the money that is raised by way of cap-and-trade is not strictly a tax. What it does is, it raises money from those people who pollute and it transfers the money to those people who are going to reduce emissions. The net effect is, we reduce emissions into the atmosphere.

Therefore, for the government, and the Conservatives in the last election, to make the argument that this is strictly a carbon tax I think is a bit of bait and switch. It was a bit of trying to get people's minds over here believing that it was some kind of a big tax that was coming your way instead of really what it is: It's about making polluters pay. So when the government says, "We're for the people," the people that they're talking about are polluters. They're not talking about you and I and our neighbours; they're talking about polluters—because who in the end is going to pay now that the government has decided that it's going to get rid of cap-and-trade rather than fix it?

We agree, as New Democrats, that there are parts of the cap-and-trade system that had to be fixed. We can agree on some of those, but what the government is essentially doing is saying, "We're going to get rid of cap-and-trade." By getting rid of cap-and-trade, now you lose the money that is paid by the polluters in order to have others lessen their emissions into the atmosphere.

My friend the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay raised the story of schools in his riding, where only one classroom in the whole building has air conditioning. Some of the money from cap-and-trade was going to go to that school in order to provide air conditioning for the rest of the classrooms. That was the net benefit of what cap-and-trade did.

The government is trying to argue that this was strictly a tax. In my view, that's a false argument. This is a plan

by which you reduce carbon emissions. So it leaves you with the question that has been raised on this side of the House: What is your plan? There are only three ways that you can move on greenhouse emissions: You can go by way of a carbon tax, which we don't favour on either side of the House; you can go cap-and-trade, which we think is a compromise, where at least the polluter pays, those polluting are the ones who pay to reduce the emissions, and the benefactors at the end are the people; or you're going to regulate the economy and what it is that you can emit into the atmosphere. I have a bit of a hard time believing that a Conservative government is going to do anything major when it comes to changing the regulations and laws when it comes to how much you can emit into the atmosphere—because what is real is that climate change is here. Look outside. We're getting record temperatures that we've never seen the world over year after year.

My good friend from Mushkegowuk—James Bay talks about communities like Kashechewan that are now being evacuated every year because the breakup on the Albany River is pretty severe compared to what it used to be. We used to have a longer thaw period in the spring. It was very well managed, to a certain degree, by nature. Now we have this quick unthaw, and we have the bunching up of the ice that builds up a big dam of water on the Albany River and we end up flooding communities like Kashchewan or Fort Albany and others, and other coastal communities.

So clearly, climate change is here, and the government has to be coming clean: What is your plan? What are you going to do to reduce carbon emissions in our atmosphere as a jurisdiction here in Ontario that will add to a greener planet, that will add to our responsibilities of meeting the Paris accord? What I hear this government saying is, "We're the ostrich party. Climate change isn't here, and like a bunch of ostriches, we're going to stick our heads in the sand and hope that it all goes away in the next four years." Well, let me tell you, climate change is here. It's happening. It's the world over. We're seeing record temperatures. We're seeing higher waters. We see islands in the Pacific that are being evacuated because they can't live on the islands because of the water levels coming up in certain places, like the Seychelles. Clearly, there's something happening in our atmosphere, and this government tends to act like an ostrich and say that it's not happening.

I hear members get up and say, "Yes, there is climate change," but they have no approach, no plan in order to deal with how you mitigate climate change. Either we're going to be contributing to the solution, or we're going to be perpetuating the problem. It sounds to me that this government wants to stand on the side of perpetuating the problem rather than trying to deal with it.

You had to make a choice. If like us, like New Democrats, you don't agree with a carbon tax, then you either have to regulate the polluters, which you're not prepared to do, or you have to have a cap-and-trade system in order to get the polluters to pay for the mitigation that happens by others who are willing to invest to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I think we're almost close to that time. I will just allow you to do your job at this point.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Well, thank you very much. You do have time left on the clock, and we will have an opportunity for questions and comments at the next appropriate opportunity for you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now it is 10:15, and this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M. Gilles Bisson: J'ai le plaisir de vous introduire à deux personnages qui sont spéciaux à notre cœur dans la famille, ma nièce et mon neveu : Jonathan Beauchamp, qui est ici à l'Université de Toronto comme prof, et sa soeur, Émilie, qui est à Londres en Angleterre et qui travaille dans le domaine de l'environnement. J'aimerais avoir le plaisir de leur dire bienvenue à notre Assemblée législative.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. I'd like to introduce, from FirstOntario Credit Union, Mr. Kelly Harris.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's my pleasure to introduce some special guests. We have two from the UK and four from New Jersey. They're all from the Butt family.

Zahid Butt is the president of my Hamilton East-Stoney Creek riding association. We have with him Shahid Butt, Abdullah Butt, Usama Butt, Fahd Butt, Souban Butt, Shafiq Butt and, most importantly, my wife, Carole Paikin-Milner.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I wish to introduce a long-time friend, an associate of many here in the House and a constituent of the Honourable Michael Tibollo. I'd like to introduce Gabe Spoletini.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Good morning, everyone. I'd like to welcome Dr. Michael Kirlew, physician for Wapekeka First Nation in Sioux Lookout, and also his daughters Naomi and Liana.

Also, as a First Nations person of this land, I'd like to welcome all MPPs to this land.

Mrs. Amy Fee: I'd like to welcome four different people today who are here from OPSWA, which is the Ontario Personal Support Workers Association. We have Ian DaSilva, Miranda Ferrier and Thia Stephens. Both Miranda and Thia are members in my riding, from Kitchener South—Hespeler.

I'd also like to welcome Janet MacDougall from Yes I Can.

Mr. Chris Glover: I'd like to welcome Nancy Trendoff, my constituency assistant; Kelly Whetter, who is the mother of a son who was lost to gun violence in the city; Elizabeth Correia, who is a youth counsellor; Stacey King, who is the mother of the three girls who were injured in the playground shooting in Scarborough earlier this summer; Patrick Knight, who is a TDSB principal and the principal of the Toronto West Detention Centre;

Louis March from the Zero Gun Violence Movement; Kathleen McDevitt, whose son lost his best friend to gun violence; Munira Abukar, who is a community worker; and Gary Pieters, who is a community activist.

Hon. Rod Phillips: It's a pleasure today to introduce one of my constituents from Ajax, Bob Broadstock, to the Legislature. Bob is a breeder, owner and trainer, and president of the Quarter Racing Owners of Ontario, which is dedicated to supporting the long-term sustainability of Ontario's horse racing. I welcome him here today.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I'd like to introduce Mr. Neal Roberts, who is the chief of the Middlesex-London Paramedic Service and also the president of the Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'd like to introduce my daughter Eve Farrell and her partner, Mike Holm, who are visiting from Kingston today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Roman Baber: It's a pleasure to introduce a constituent, a mentor and a friend. Mr. Arthur Downes, in the east gallery, served on close to a dozen hospital boards in Ontario and also served the people of Ontario as a justice of the peace from 1978 to 1997. Today also marks his 91st birthday. Welcome and happy birthday, Your Worship.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'd like to welcome Michael Hampton and David Cherkewski from Hamilton. They'll be joined by a number of other Hamiltonians this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: It's an honour to introduce my good friend, a small business owner and constituent from Brampton South, T. J. Saggu, and his son Khushwant Saggu. He's also the owner of Ultra-Modern Medical clinics in Brampton and Milton.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: It is my pleasure this morning—joining us from the Philippine consulate office we have the consul general, Rosalita Prospero; senior trade commissioner Maria Alvero; consul Edna May Lazaro; trade assistant Roselle Corro and trade assistant Giannina Uy.

I would also like to introduce a team from Jollibee, a famous Philippine restaurant chain, which now has two locations in Ontario: vice-president Maribeth dela Cruz, Michelle Alino, Agnes Delos Santos, Madel Longa and Cherryl Pascua.

Also, we have the former federal candidate for Mississauga Centre, Julius Tiangson, and Vincent Ching visiting, from the Philippines. Welcome to the Legislature, everyone.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It's my pleasure to give a warm welcome to Deirdre Pike, member of the operational steering committee, and Tom Cooper, director of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction. They are with us this morning.

I would also like to join the member from this morning to welcome Gary Pieters, Patrick Knight, Munira Abukar, Louis March and all the members who are here talking about such a very important issue.

Welcome, Deirdre; nice to see you.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I'd like to recognize a former member who's in the House. Phil Gillies is joining us today, a former minister and member for Brant, if I'm not mistaken. Phil was one of the early supporters in my campaign. Welcome, Phil.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Indeed, we welcome Phil Gillies, who was the MPP for the riding of Brantford in the 32nd and 33rd Parliaments.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Day after day, this Premier is making decisions that make life harder and more expensive for working families and for the most vulnerable people in our communities. Slashing the social assistance increase and cancelling the Basic Income Pilot doesn't help people. It keeps folks trapped in poverty. Why is this Premier cutting supports that the most vulnerable families depend upon?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, it's funny how the Leader of the Opposition has come down here, day after day after day, talking about the Wynne Liberal legacy that she propped up for 15 years. That put us in debt \$340 billion—the highest taxes in Canada, the highest hydro rates anywhere in North America. The Leader of the Opposition continues, day after day, telling the people of Ontario how she wants to have the highest carbon taxes anywhere in Canada, the highest gas prices anywhere in Canada. Talk about taking care of the most needy—that's not part of what she really believes in. She believes in raising taxes.

1040

The people on social assistance actually pay energy costs. I met with Elsie yesterday in Belleville, and on her cheque—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, I can tell you what's not funny around here, and that's the wrong-headed priorities of this Premier.

I'm incredibly worried about what this Premier's cuts mean to the most vulnerable people across Ontario. Cutting social assistance and cancelling the Basic Income Pilot means that more people will be forced to go to food banks, more people will be at risk of homelessness and more people will struggle to survive in dire poverty.

As of Monday, 15,000 people have signed a petition calling on this Premier to reverse course and save the Basic Income Pilot project, like he promised to do during the campaign. Will this Premier listen, or will he continue to hurt the lowest-income people in Ontario?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I'll carry on about Elsie. I met Elsie in Belleville. Elsie is on social assistance. She showed me her paycheque and

there was a \$139 energy cost. I told her that we're going to increase her payments by 1.5%. Then I asked Elsie, "What's 12% of \$139?" We came up with a figure that's actually higher than 1.5%. Elsie had a car outside, and I told Elsie that her gas prices, once we scrap the cap-and-trade, are going down 10 cents per litre. So once I explained to Elsie that if you add up everything—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Restart the clock.

Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I'm incredibly proud to welcome almost 30 people from my city of Hamilton who are participating in the Basic Income Pilot project. They're here with their families, friends and local advocates. They're here with one message for the Premier of this province: Slashing social assistance and cancelling basic income is absolutely the wrong thing to do because it hurts thousands of people across Ontario. In fact, it's bullying the most vulnerable people in our province.

How can this Premier look people in the eye and rip away the supports that these folks need to get out of poverty and get their lives back on track?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is using the same math as she did during the election—skewing the numbers of \$5 billion.

Let me tell the people on social assistance that they're going to have a 1.5% increase, they're going to have lower energy costs, they're going to have lower gas costs.

And my friends, do you know what they want more than anything? They want a good-paying job. We're going to provide them with a good-paying job. We're going to get the economy booming once again here in Ontario until less people are on social assistance. In the last 15 years, Mr. Speaker, people on social assistance has increased 55%.

The basic guaranteed income program that the Leader of the Opposition is talking about would cost the province \$17 billion. But I know the Leader of the Opposition thinks money grows on trees down here—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you, Premier. Take your seat, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Restart the clock.

Next question.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier, whose government, last time they were in office, reduced social assistance by almost 23%, driving people into the deepest poverty that we've seen in this province over the last 15 years because the Liberals didn't fix it.

Today we have somebody from Hamilton named Tim with us. Here's what basic income means to Tim. It means he can finally buy healthy food. He can finally afford to take the bus to get to his doctors' appointments. He can finally save up first and last months' rent so that he can actually find housing that's safe, clean and where he doesn't have to live in fear.

Why is this Premier ripping basic income away from Tim and hundreds of people like him?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: We're going to make Tim and people like Tim have a better life, because we're going to increase their assistance by 1.5%. Again, we're going to lower Tim's energy costs by 12%. And if Tim drives a car, or any of Tim's friends—

Ms. Catherine Fife: He doesn't drive a car. He's on social assistance.

Hon. Doug Ford: It's amazing how they're out of tune.

Elsie drove a car. Elsie drove a car, and a lot of people on social assistance drive a car. They've got to put gas in their tanks, just like you. If it was up to the Leader of the Opposition, she'd have the highest gas prices in North America.

Let's not forget that the Leader of the Opposition sat down here for years and years propping up the Wynne Liberals, propping up the high carbon tax, propping up high taxes, propping up high gas prices—tax, tax, tax, spend, spend, spend.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Members will please take their seats. The House will come to order.

Start the clock. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Tim is not alone. Every one of the basic income participants here today has a story about how basic income has helped improve their lives. Many of these stories are being published in news sources across the province from the many communities that have Basic Income Pilot programs running.

But this Premier doesn't want to hear those stories, Speaker. He refuses to accept the fact that income security helps families out of poverty. That's what income security does; it helps people get out of poverty. It helps them live healthier lives. It gives people hope—hope that they can actually have a life that gets better. That's what it does.

Will the Premier admit that he shut down basic income before seeing the results because he doesn't want to see that it actually works?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Do you know what helps people like Tim? People like Tim—

Interjection: Buck a beer.

Hon. Doug Ford: Oh, I forgot. People like Tim aren't allowed to have beer. I'm sorry; you're right.

What helps people like Tim is a good-paying job. What helps people like Tim is reducing their hydro costs. What helps people like Tim is getting the economy going until once he gets a job and he does have a car, he'll have 10 cents a litre less when he goes to the gas pumps.

I would like to ask the Leader of the Opposition through you, Mr. Speaker: Where is she getting the \$17 billion? I guess the same place they're getting—when it comes to the highest carbon tax, the highest gas prices, the highest hydro rates, guess what? There's only one person who pays the bills in Ontario, and that's the taxpayer.

We're going to stand up for the people.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Members will please take their seats.

Start the clock. Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It may be information to this Premier, but some of the people on the pilot project are actually recipients of the Ontario Disability Support Program as well, Speaker. I don't know whether they're going to be having the opportunity to get the kind of jobs that the Premier is talking about.

What he should also recognize is that this pilot project is about bringing information on which to make decisions. I guess he doesn't want the facts. He doesn't want the information on which to make proper decisions because he's got the wrong priorities.

This Premier has the wrong priorities, and we see it in decision after decision that he is making. He's choosing to put the health of students at risk just to please his radical social conservative friends. He's choosing to cut \$330 million from mental health every year, making wait-lists even longer. Now he's choosing to slash the social assistance increase, cancel the basic income program and take money away from the most vulnerable people in Ontario. Why is the health and well-being of Ontarians so incredibly low on this Premier's priority list?

1050

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats.

Premier?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Again, the Leader of the Opposition is too busy defending the Wynne Liberals. We just had an election and the people spoke loud and clear here in Ontario. They're tired of the policies of the Wynne Liberals. They're tired of the NDP propping them up for the last 15 years. They're tired of having the largest subnational debt in the entire world. They're tired of paying \$12 billion a year in servicing that debt. Mr. Speaker, just imagine how many people we can help if we didn't have to pay \$12 billion a year in debt.

My friends, we're going to lower taxes. I know you don't like lowering taxes. We're going to lower gas prices. We're going to scrap the cap-and-trade to reduce gas prices by 10 cents a litre. And we're going to create great-paying jobs.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Members will take their seats.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The House will come to order.

Mr. Michael Coteau: The arrogance.

Hon. Doug Ford: Is that the Liberals calling us arrogant?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier will come to order. The member for Niagara West will come to order. The member for Don Valley East will come to order.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Act like ministers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Don Valley East will come to order.

Restart the clock. New question?

CURRICULUM

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. The Premier's plan to rip up the sexual health curriculum puts students at risk. That's according to parents, educators and dozens of school boards across Ontario. Yesterday, nearly 1,800 health care professionals called on the Premier to restore the updated health curriculum in its entirety. Anything less will put children in harm's way and deny kids the information they deserve about consent, cyberbullying, gender identity and same-sex families.

Will the Premier finally do the right thing, listen to health care professionals and restore the updated health curriculum for this September?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Leader of the Opposition: I know the Leader of the Opposition wants to keep pounding away about the sex ed. But the Leader of the Opposition is forgetting about the most critical thing in education: Half our students are failing math. We're going to make sure our students aren't on the bottom tier. By the way, Mr. Speaker, we have the lowest math scores in all of Canada. We're going to make sure that our students have the highest math scores in all of Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: By dragging students back to the 1998 curriculum, this Premier is scrubbing same-sex families, gender identity and consent out of our classrooms. And unfortunately, the Deputy Premier is playing along with the Premier's dangerous plan. She said that if kids want to talk about those issues, it won't happen in the classroom under the 1998 curriculum; it should happen in private, behind closed doors.

Does the Premier agree with his Deputy Premier that questions about same-sex families, gender identity and consent should be put back in the closet instead of being welcomed in all of Ontario's classrooms?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Education.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, through you to the Leader of the Opposition: I have to tell you that we are going to be listening this fall. I can't wait to go out and embark on the consultations that not only will touch on sex ed, but as the Premier just said, we're going to be listening to how we can move forward and prop our

students up and prepare them for the realities of today—and improve math scores, for example. They should be absolutely hanging their heads that they do not agree with us that we need to improve math scores in this province.

So I can't wait to kick off—

Ms. Catherine Fife: They can do addition and learn about consent at the same time.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Waterloo will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Davenport will come to order.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson:—this comprehensive consultation where, yes, we will be respecting parents and we will be respecting people who want to raise their voice to help us put our students back on a path to a successful career, because we know that over the last 15 years, it went in the opposite direction.

BEVERAGE ALCOHOL SALES

Mr. Mike Harris: My question is for the Minister of Finance. But, before I ask my question, I would like to wish him a happy birthday today.

It was truly heartening to see you, the Premier and our government House leader fulfilling yet another election campaign promise yesterday. This is truly a mark of a government for the people. I know that as you have travelled across the province over the past weeks and months, you have been getting the same question over and over again: “When are you bringing buck a beer back to Ontario?”

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell the House more about how he has been fulfilling this promise and saving money for the beer consumers of Ontario?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I want to thank my fellow North Bayite for the question on my plenty-ninth birthday.

We promised during the election campaign that we would bring back buck a beer to Ontario. Starting this Labour Day weekend, we're going to deliver buck a beer to Ontario. Promise made, promise kept.

It was truly a pleasure to be with the Premier and the government House leader in his riding yesterday to launch the Premier's buck-a-beer challenge. By encouraging competition in Ontario's brewing industry, opportunities will be created for value-priced beer products, and in doing so, keep more money in the pockets of consumers.

Starting August 27, brewers across Ontario will have the choice—it's their choice—to lower prices to \$1 for any beer under 5.6% alcohol volume.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Mike Harris: Back to the minister: I would like to thank the minister for his response. It is encouraging to hear that not only will buck a beer be in place for the Labour Day long weekend but it may create new business opportunities for Ontario brewers as well.

Under Premier Ford, Ontario is certainly open for business. It is hard to understand how the previous Liber-

al government banned buck a beer, to the detriment of our consumers' choice and making people pay more for their beer.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please explain how it got to this point and why we need to bring buck a beer back to Ontario?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Again, thank you for the question.

Let's review the actions of the previous government: Before 2008, buck a beer was popular with both consumers and brewers. Speaker, it was a win-win. The Liberals then added a layer of red tape when they raised the minimum beer price and made buck a beer illegal. That was bad for fostering competition and bad for the consumers who had to pay a larger price. But as of August 27, brewers will now have the choice to sell beer for \$1 again. This comes with no financial subsidy.

Let me stress once again, we are doing this smartly and responsibly. We remain unwavering in our commitment to road safety and responsibility. We are going to trust consumers to make mature and responsible decisions, but there is zero tolerance for those who do not.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Chris Glover: My question is for the Premier. The connection between poverty and gun violence is indisputable. Today, community members and mothers of children injured or lost to gun violence came to Queen's Park to speak about how chronically low-income communities suffer from higher rates of violence and homicide. They want the Premier to take concrete steps towards alleviating poverty, beginning by reversing his cuts to social assistance and his cancellation of the Basic Income Pilot.

Will the Premier listen to those families who have first-hand lived experience and reverse his decisions?

1100

Hon. Doug Ford: The Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you to the member for his question and the linkage and the importance for us to have a serious conversation in this province about poverty.

One in seven people live in poverty in this province, which is why we have decided to ensure that we have a better system across all ministries to support those who are living in vulnerable circumstances.

For 15 years, we've had a patchwork, disjointed system that wasn't lifting people up. In fact, it was trapping them further into poverty—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: After you drove them into deeper poverty.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Leader of the Opposition, please come to order.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: What we have said is that we're going to pause the Liberal plan, raise rates across the board in social assistance by 1.5%, and we will ethically

and compassionately, with a lengthy runway, wind down the basic income program.

Let me be perfectly clear: We take this issue very seriously. We're going to make life more affordable for all Ontarians, including those who are in vulnerable circumstances, and they will always have a champion in me.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats. Stop the clock.

Restart the clock. Supplementary?

Mr. Chris Glover: We can only begin to tackle gun violence once we've tackled poverty as its root cause. People in our communities are living in poverty because of already too low social assistance rates that keep them there.

The people who came to speak today at Queen's Park are asking for respect for people living on low incomes. They want to be consulted—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier will come to order. The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

Mr. Chris Glover: They want to be consulted about decisions that impact them—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Transportation will come to order.

Mr. Chris Glover: —such as the cuts to social assistance and the cancellation of the basic income program.

Will the Premier put a stop to his cuts until he has properly consulted with those who are living in poverty in this province?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Again, I want to say thank you to the honourable member for his question. I don't agree with the premise.

We are raising rates by 1.5% across the board for social assistance in Ontario Works and Ontario disability support. We have said that we will come back on November 8 with a plan after 100 days of consultation; that's 93 days from now.

We are making sure, for the first time in 15 years, that the people who are responsible for basic income, poverty reduction, ODSP and Ontario Works are sitting around the same table—for the first time in 15 years—so we can ensure that there is going to be a plan in place for Ontario's most vulnerable people so we can lift them up, get them a job if they can and, if they can't, provide them with the best supports we possibly can.

We want to make life more affordable for people; they want to continue with a broken system. I'm not having any of that.

BEVERAGE ALCOHOL SALES

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question is for the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. Yesterday, our government for the people fulfilled yet another campaign promise, announcing that buck a beer will again be a reality in Ontario. Promise made, promise kept. Effective

August 27, brewers right across Ontario will have the opportunity to sell beer for \$1 if they so choose.

Minister, I know you have long supported Ontario's brewing industry. Can you speak about why the Premier's challenge is such an important step forward?

Hon. Todd Smith: What a great question this morning.

Yesterday, I was really pleased to have the Premier and the finance minister in my home riding in Prince Edward county to make a very-good-news announcement for the people of Ontario.

Yesterday, the Premier put out the challenge to every brewer, big and small, to lower their price of a beer to \$1. Nobody's being forced to lower their prices. I'm looking forward, and I know the Premier's looking forward, to seeing which brewers take the plunge here on his challenge. It's our belief with our government that providing choice and competition results in benefits for consumers and people keeping more money in their pockets.

We were elected on a plan to reduce red tape. We were elected on a plan to put the people of Ontario first. We promised to bring buck a beer back to Ontario. And I'm really happy to say that we're lowering the cost of hydro, we're lowering the cost of gas and we're lowering the cost of beer.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Start the clock. Supplementary.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Back to the minister: Not more than a decade ago, buck a beer was a huge hit in Ontario, including in my hometown of Hamilton. Consumers and brewers alike loved it. They loved it in Hamilton.

But then the Liberals and their friends wanted their cut, and they raised the minimum beer price in Ontario. They created another piece of red tape that actually made buck a beer illegal.

Minister, can you please tell the House how buck a beer can be beneficial once again, for both Ontario beer drinkers and Ontario brewers?

Hon. Todd Smith: It has been a busy summer for the new government here in Ontario. We've accomplished a lot already. Again, we've lowered the price of electricity, we got kids back to school at York University this fall and we dealt with another campaign promise yesterday, making sure that we can lower the cost of beer to a buck a beer for the people of Ontario.

It was an honour yesterday to have the Premier and the member from Nipissing, the birthday boy, with me in Prince Edward county to announce that we're bringing back buck a beer. Our government encourages brewers to lower their prices to the newly reduced price floor through the Premier's buck-a-beer challenge, effective August 27.

I am proud to be a part of a government that's taking steps to allow people to keep more of their money. That's what they promised they could do, to keep more of their money, and we're delivering on that promise.

We're going to do this smartly and responsibly, Mr. Speaker. Our commitment to road safety is unwavering.

We trust Ontario beer drinkers and other consumers to make smart, mature and—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Members will take their seats.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier will come to order. The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. I need to be able to hear the questions and the responses.

BEVERAGE ALCOHOL SALES

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday's announcement that the government will now be going into the beer subsidy business just shows how backwards this government's priorities are. Ontarians expect their government to get on with the hard work of making life better for families—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane. The government side has to come to order. I can't hear him.

Mr. John Vanthof: That means making investments in mental health services, not slashing them by \$335 million a year. That means fixing our crumbling schools, not cutting \$100 million from school repairs. Why is this government choosing to spend public money to subsidize beer corporations while slashing planned social assistance increases for Ontario's most vulnerable citizens?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: First of all, there is no financial subsidy. I don't understand why the member doesn't take yes for an answer. We have told them that buck a beer is a simple change of the Liberal law that increased the floor price to \$1.25. We are reducing the floor price and allowing the beer companies to simply sell beer for a buck. There is no financial subsidy for these companies.

What I can tell you, Speaker, is that we're bringing real relief for families. This is yet another promise that's made for the people. This is one of the issues that I'll address in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: In what alternate universe is providing free advertising and premium shelf space not a subsidy? The only breweries that can afford to produce \$1 beer will be large multinational corporations that can lower quality to access your government subsidies. That is putting Ontario's small and craft brewers at risk. They will now have to compete with cheap government-subsidized beer.

1110

Why is this government spending public money to subsidize cheap beer at the expense of Ontario's craft brewers?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats.

Minister of Finance, response?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, I do not understand why the member cannot appreciate that there is no subsidy in this. This is lowering the floor of beer prices from \$1.25 to \$1. They just will not take yes for an answer.

They just will not take yes for an answer.

What this government is also doing is scrapping cap-and-trade, lowering the corporate tax rate from 11.5% to 10.5% and lowering middle-income taxes by 20%. We're cutting hydro rates by 12%. These are all of the issues that are meant to bring real relief and real prosperity for the people.

This is a plan for the people. If the members of the opposition do not want to accept the facts—I realize the facts don't fit with this beautiful narrative—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

The member for Don Valley East.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Michael Coteau: My question is to the Premier. Recently, I had the opportunity to sit down with a group of young individuals who are receiving support from social services. I asked them a question: If they could change anything in relation to that program, what would it be? I remember clearly a young man saying to me that he wished he could just keep a little bit more of his money. He felt discouraged that if he earned anything over \$200, the government would take 50% of that money.

Premier, you decided to cancel the planned earning exemption increase that would allow people on social assistance to earn \$400 rather than the current \$200. I believe that one of the best ways to get people back into the workforce is to provide an incentive. Premier, why did you decide to cancel a program that would help people get back into the workforce?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I thank the honourable member for his question.

Look, we chose a path a week ago today to hit the pause button on a disjointed patchwork set of policies by the previous administration. He is the previous minister and he would know that. What we have said instead is that we are going to put forward a 1.5% across-the-board increase in social assistance, and we will, over the next 93 days—it was 100 days last week—come forward with a credible plan with all of the different people who were part of his former ministry, and now part of mine, so that we can start to lift people up and we can ensure that they take home more of their hard-earned money and increase their ability to get jobs.

That's what our plan is about. That's what we're going to do. We're going to restore dignity in the system, we're going to restore confidence in the system and we're going to try to lift up those one in seven people who are living in poverty right now in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Coteau: Premier, this was another promise made and another promise broken by your minister. When you cancelled the Basic Income Pilot, you sent a clear message to Ontarians. You sent a message that Doug Ford—sorry, the Premier—and the Conservatives are against better health outcomes, getting people back to work faster and helping people find homes. Instead, the government would rather use money to subsidize the Premier's very own partisan news channel.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain why her party—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The government side will come to order.

Restart. The member should put his question.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Minister, can you explain why your party's talk is cheaper than your buck a beer?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I find it a bit rich that the member opposite, who used to be the Minister of Community and Social Services, would sit in this House today and ask a question on the Basic Income Pilot project, because I'll tell you what my ministry told me yesterday: Not once did that member ask for a briefing on basic income security when he was the minister. Never once did he ask how much the pilot project was—\$150 million. Never once did he ask how many people were not compliant—25%. And never once did he ask what a Basic Income Pilot project would be if it were extended—that's \$17 billion; a 7% increase in the HST. That's what he's doing to the vulnerable. That's what he's doing to the poor.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The member for Don Valley East must come to order. The government side must come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier will come to order. The member for Don Valley East—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Don Valley East will withdraw.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Don Valley East is warned.

Next question.

SENIORS

Mrs. Gila Martow: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. I frequently get letters and phone calls in my riding of Thornhill from seniors. When I first moved to Thornhill 30 years ago it was mostly young families, but now we have so many great seniors living in our riding and they're quite unaware of the initiatives to help them stay in shape. I think that there's a lot more that we could do to help our seniors stay healthy, both physically and mentally. Could the minister

share with us what programs are in place to keep all the great seniors in all of our ridings healthy and engaged?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: To my friend and colleague, thank you for the question.

I'm pleased to share an initiative that is led by my colleague the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility. Our government has a number of initiatives and public education efforts to improve the quality of life for Ontario seniors.

One of these is the province-wide active living fairs. Active living fairs bring seniors and caregivers together to connect and learn about key issues that affect their health and well-being. They also share information about available supports and programs. Fairs occur in seniors' centres and include rural, francophone and Indigenous seniors. This year, 70 active living fairs and six regional workshops will be delivered through our partnership with the Older Adult Centres' Association of Ontario. I encourage you to visit oacao.org to find a seniors' fair near you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Again to the minister: I want to really thank the minister for all this information. I know many seniors in my riding are anxious to take part in many of the programs, like the active living fairs that were just described. However I'm sure all members of the House would agree with me when I say that there's a lot more that we can do in order to support all the great seniors all across our province of Ontario. Could the minister tell us what else is being done to promote activities that help keep our seniors active and reduce social isolation?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister, response?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I'm happy to, Speaker. Through the Ontario sport and rec fund we are supporting 45 projects through Active for Life recreation. These programs give seniors more opportunity to stay fit and connected in their communities. Just recently, the Muskoka Lawn Bowling Club was awarded funding through this program to expand their lawn bowling program for seniors.

Another program that promotes active living for seniors is the Ontario senior games. The Ontario 55+ games are a celebration of active living hosted throughout the year, alternating between winter and summer. This coming weekend 1,400 participants from across Ontario will come to Mississauga to participate in the Ontario 55+ games. I'd like to wish all the competitors all the best of luck at the games this weekend.

These are just a few examples of some of the ways that our government is encouraging active, healthy living for seniors across Ontario.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. The minister acts as if all that's needed for Basic Income Pilot participants is to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and they'll be set. But many of those participants were on

long-term disability, unable to work like other Ontarians, and that will still be true the day after this minister ends the Basic Income Pilot. The income security road map recommended a 5% increase to ODSP. The previous government committed to 3%, but this government slashed even that in half.

1120

Today I will be tabling a motion calling on the government to reverse this wrong-headed decision. Will the minister do the right thing, support my motion, stop the cuts to social assistance and reverse the decision to cancel the Basic Income Pilot project?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much to the member for her question; I'll look forward to seeing what the motion actually stands for.

But I guess I have to once again reject the premise of the question, because we have not slashed anything. We are coming forward with a 1.5% across-the-board increase September 1. We've also said we will compassionately, in a lengthy time frame, wind down the Basic Income Pilot project.

I just wanted to point out, to begin with, the basic income research project is failing, and it's plain and simple. The Liberal government had difficulty signing people up for this approach. Now a sizable number, over 25%, have either dropped out or were failing to meet their obligations such as filing their taxes. It calls into question whether the \$150 million being spent is actually going to be with valid research.

Speaker, where I come from, \$150 million is a lot of money. What we want to do in 93 days is come back with a plan that will lift more people up and support those who need it most.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: David Cherkewski had been on disability benefits for 15 years due to mental illness, where he, as he put it, barely survived. Then he joined the Basic Income Pilot. David was able to buy fresh fruit and find affordable housing, and was even looking to start a co-op for people with disabilities.

Without the basic income, those basics like fresh fruits, those plans like the co-op, are gone, replaced with a cut by half of the scheduled 3% increase to disability benefits that David was barely surviving on.

What does the minister have to say to David?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much to the member opposite.

I would like to say to David that we want to hear him. We want to hear his stories. We want to see how we can best support him when we come forward with our plan in 93 days.

But I again reject the premise. There is no slash. There is no cut. It is a 1.5% increase across the board. We're hitting the pause button on a disjointed, fragmented approach that was taken by the previous Liberal government and we're going to make sure that all of the various areas within my ministry are talking to one another for the first time in 15 years so we can have better outcomes for people like David.

My staff are in the galleries today. If anyone who is on the Basic Income Pilot project wants to speak with them, we're happy to do that. We want to hear their stories.

But let me be perfectly clear: What the member opposite actually wants is a \$17-billion program that would increase the HST by 7%. A 20% HST in the province of Ontario would damage the people of this province further.

TAXATION

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: My question is for the Attorney General. Last week the government announced its intentions to take the next step in its fight against the federal government's plan to impose an unaffordable carbon tax on the people of Ontario. Mr. Speaker, I can't tell you how pleased I was to see the minister and her colleagues stand and announce that our government will be seeking an opinion from the Ontario Court of Appeal on whether or not the federal carbon tax is unconstitutional in whole or in part.

I know that for the people of my riding, who have felt the burden of Liberal taxes for far too long, this is welcome news. I also know that last month the Premier announced that Ontario will be supporting Saskatchewan's challenge of the federal carbon tax in their Court of Appeal.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Attorney General: Can she tell us, the House, why Ontario is launching a separate challenge—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

The Attorney General.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to answer the member's question.

Our government was given a mandate by the people of Ontario to make life more affordable and to stand up for what matters to them. This means challenging the Trudeau Liberals' carbon tax. We are using every tool available to us to do so.

By participating in both our own Court of Appeal challenge and supporting Saskatchewan's challenge, we are working in tandem to ensure that both challenges proceed efficiently and affordably while allowing the courts the ability to consider all arguments regarding the validity of the federal carbon tax.

As I said yesterday, Mr. Speaker, anywhere the carbon tax is being challenged, we want to be part of that fight. Our aim is simple but will mean a great deal for the people who have struggled under Liberal taxes for more than a decade. We want to see money put back in the pockets of taxpayers and to deliver real tax relief for Ontario families and small businesses.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: It's clear to me, Mr. Speaker, that the government is taking its commitment to the people of Ontario very seriously. I know the people of my riding will be pleased to know that their government is working hard on their behalf, and I know that they will

be even more pleased when we win this challenge for them.

We know that the federal government is already having second thoughts about their carbon tax, as evidenced by news reports last week that they were scaling back the scope of it. This is certainly heartening news for provinces opposed to this unaffordable tax, which is why I'm wondering if the minister can speak a bit about what happens if other provinces would like to join our challenge, and what our basis is in filing it.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I thank the member for the supplementary question. As the Attorney General, I wouldn't bring forward a case that I didn't have confidence in. I also hope that it serves as an inspiration to others who may also be questioning the validity of the Trudeau Liberals' carbon tax.

In filing our challenge, Mr. Speaker, Ontario's position is clear: This is an unconstitutional tax that will do nothing but drive up the cost of goods and services that Ontarians rely on every day. By putting forward this challenge, we are working hard to stand up for the people of Ontario and make life more affordable in this province again.

While it is up to the courts to decide who may participate in Ontario's challenge, it is our commitment that anywhere the federal carbon tax is being challenged, we want to be part of that fight.

MERCURY POISONING

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Speaker.

Remarks in Oji-Cree.

My question is to the Minister of Indigenous Affairs. The people of Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong, the first peoples of this land, have reached an agreement with the provincial government: \$85 million was put in trust to go towards cleaning the river of the mercury that has been poisoning the people in these communities.

The Premier, during the campaign, said that his government would clean up the river and the land as quickly as possible and ensure everyone gets high-quality care. What has the government done to fulfill this commitment?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I thank the member for his question.

Every Ontario resident deserves to have access to safe, clean drinking water. We will work closely with those Indigenous communities, Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong—two communities I'm intimately familiar with—and the opportunity to correct that wrong, Mr. Speaker.

We'll also be working and challenging our federal government partners to make sure that those two communities have safe drinking water. The federal government must step up to ensure that every Ontario resident can count on this government for that commitment.

As the member of provincial Parliament for Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong should know, I have been involved in this file for a very long time. We take it very

seriously and we hope to protect, defend and deliver a solution for these two communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Back to the Minister of Indigenous Affairs: When a promise is made to First Nations people, the first peoples of this land, it has to be kept.

1130

What contact has the Premier made with the chief and council of Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong? When can they expect the cleanup of the river and the land with the mercury contamination? Will the Premier, as the New Democrats had committed, contribute to a mercury treatment centre for the people in these communities?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Mr. Speaker, as I previously stated, we're committed to safe, clean drinking water in those two communities, as we are for every community across Ontario. We're also committed to ensuring that those two communities have the same kind of economic opportunities moving forward as other communities. There are mining exploration activities immediately in the region, and we want those communities to have increased prosperity, to have access to jobs, and to have access to the kinds of things that many other Ontarians have come to expect.

Moving forward, Mr. Speaker, I can assure this member that I've met with senior officials in my department. We've discussed the opportunity here to correct and fix that problem. We're committed to it for the benefit not only of those communities but the people in our vast and beautiful region of Kenora–Rainy River.

TAXATION

Ms. Lindsey Park: My question is for the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. We heard over and over again on the campaign trail for the last year that businesses and families did not want the Liberals' cap-and-trade scheme. The Liberals said that their cap-and-trade scheme collected dollars from Ontarians that would spawn a new economy. Speaker, as our government winds down the cap-and-trade program, the vice-president of corporate strategy at Toyota had some choice parting words for the program. He said, "If you build up consumer demand solely based on how many thousands of dollars the government can give you to encourage you to buy a car, that to me doesn't sound like a terribly sustainable business model." Speaker, we couldn't agree more with his assessment.

Can the Minister of the Environment confirm to this House that the days of the cap-and-trade scheme stifling the businesses of Ontario are over?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Through you, Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member for Durham. She puts a great deal of time and effort into supporting her constituents, and this is just one example. As Bill 4 is debated in this House this week, I'd also like to thank the members from Carleton, Kitchener–Conestoga, Ottawa West–Nepean and Mississauga–Malton, who are speaking on behalf of their constituents about this job-killing tax.

We know now that the cap-and-trade carbon tax was a job killer and we know that it did very little to affect greenhouse gas emissions. The Auditor General has stated that it would cost Ontario consumers over \$8 billion and do very little to assist in reducing emissions, which is why I know that Ontarians support getting rid of this job-killing tax.

In addition to saving families money, as the member mentioned, job creators are making it clear that it is good for them. That's good for their competition and good for jobs in Ontario. It's anticipated that the cancellation of the cap-and-trade carbon tax and our gas tax cut will mean 14,000 new jobs for Ontario. This legislation is great news for Ontario and Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Lindsey Park: Speaker, I thank the minister, through you, for his answer. Still to him: We know that getting rid of the Liberals' cap-and-trade scheme is only part of the picture. That's because the federal government still seems content with charging ahead with their own plan to impose their carbon tax on the people of Ontario. While the National Post proclaimed that "the Liberals were in retreat over their climate plan," and the Toronto Star wrote that "Trudeau and his ministers are busy managing ... what looks like a big climbdown," the threat of the federal Liberals' carbon tax is still very real.

Speaker, Ontarians have not asked us to get rid of the cap-and-trade scheme only to have a carbon tax forced on them by another level of government. Can the Minister of the Environment tell this Legislature what he's doing to ensure that the people of Ontario are not further burdened by—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member: Last week, my colleague the Attorney General announced that we would be using the courts. We have made it clear that this government will do everything in its power to stop the Trudeau government carbon tax. We promised the people of Ontario we'd take immediate action on cutting gas prices, on helping job creators, and that's what we're doing.

Mr. Speaker, in today's National Post, a fine publication, the president's fellow at the University of Calgary's School of Public Policy, Jack Mintz, wrote: "Despite the appeal among" many "policy elites for carbon taxation," carbon taxation does "not satisfy the smell test for voters."

Mr. Speaker, know that, and we know that the voters have given us a strong mandate as a result of that.

So I repeat: This government will do everything in its power to stop the Trudeau carbon tax. We know it's not good for jobs. We know it's not good for families. That's why we're fighting it, and we're going to win.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Members will take their seats.

Restart the clock. Next question: The member for Toronto—Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Did the Premier, directly or indirectly, attempt to recruit or encourage anyone to run against Patrick Brown for Peel regional chair prior to cancelling the election?

Hon. Doug Ford: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, through you to the member: Again—two days in a row—I'm very disappointed in this experienced member for the tone of his question and the content.

We made it very clear with the Better Local Government Act that we were going to make some changes—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Yes, the question has to be about government policy. I would ask the member for a supplementary relating to government policy.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Premier: Were there steps taken before he put this policy forward that would have shaped that election? Did he bring forward the cancellation of the election because he did not like those who were running in it?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That's essentially the same question. We will move on.

Next question.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines and Indigenous Affairs.

Ontario is a leader in mineral exploration and production. In fact, Toronto is the mining finance capital of the world, with 2017 alone increasing revenues of \$8.5 billion in new equity capital for mining according to the Toronto Stock Exchange.

Later this week, the minister will be attending the 2018 Energy and Mines Ministers' Conference in Iqaluit, Nunavut. Can the minister explain how the mining industry will continue to attract investments in Ontario and how the ministers' conference will help highlight Ontario's leadership in this crucial sector?

Hon. Greg Rickford: What a timely and pertinent question from the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

I'm so looking forward to going up to Iqaluit to finally—perhaps for the first time in a generation—celebrate the Ontario advantage that we see just on the horizon and how it's going to positively affect Ontario's mining sector. Ontario is a world leader in mineral exploration, development and production. We seek to re-establish Ontario's energy advantage that once made us a proud economic engine of this country and support real mining activity.

He's right. Toronto is the undisputed finance capital of the world when it comes to mining: \$9.9 billion worth of minerals, and 22% of Canada's total mineral production occurs right here in Ontario. Currently, Ontario expenditures are approximately \$526 million, but the confidence from investors in this government's plan for Ontario will see that rise to more than \$600 million. That's going—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Supplementary question?

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you to the minister for his leadership on this file.

Further to my last question, Mr. Speaker, the mining sector is also a significant employer in our province. This government has committed to creating and protecting good jobs across Ontario and sending a message that our province is open for business, by lowering taxes and cutting job-killing red tape.

Considering that around 25% of all mining jobs in Canada are based in Ontario, can the minister explain the leadership role that the mining industry is playing in creating and protecting jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Greg Rickford: The member can be assured that when I get up to Iqaluit, we're going to be talking about creating jobs in mining and Ontario's mining opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, we're open for business. Mineral production and exploration in Ontario supports more than 26,000 direct jobs and 50,000 indirect jobs. Twenty-five per cent of mining jobs in Canada are right here in this beautiful province, and about two thirds of those jobs are in northern Ontario. We share a passion for the opportunity for Indigenous communities and municipalities and the province to benefit from this opportunity. In fairness, it has been a tough couple of weeks for the spend-DP on this part for the mining sector.

Hydro One leadership renewed: promise made, promise kept.

Scrapping the cap-and-trade carbon tax: promise made, promise kept.

Putting York University students back in school for a modern workforce to support mining: promise made, promise kept.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Members will take their seats.

The House will come to order. There's still time on the clock.

Start the clock. Next question.

ETOBICOKE CENTRE NOMINATION

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is for the Premier.

The Toronto municipal election isn't the Premier's first election interference rodeo. During the provincial election a tape came to light of the Premier offering to buy memberships in Etobicoke Centre and promising people that they wouldn't even have to show up and vote at a nomination meeting, something in direct violation of PC Party rules and a clear attempt to circumvent his own party's democratic rules.

The Premier promised an investigation into allegations of election fraud. Has the investigation been completed and will the findings be made public?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank the member for the question.

Our priority in this House is the Better Local Government Act. We made it very clear when I tabled that bill how we were going to make changes to both the city of Toronto elections and the regional elections in Niagara, York, Peel and Muskoka. We made it very clear during the campaign that we were going to reduce the size and the cost of government, that we were going to make government work more accountable with more trust, and that's exactly what the Better Local Government Act is doing.

We're going to continue to debate that bill. We, again, encourage the members in the opposition benches to talk about making government more effective and more efficient rather than the drive-by smears.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: There are 124 ridings in Ontario but there's only one riding so far where the Premier appears to be breaking the rules to interfere in his party's democratic nomination process.

Were there any ridings where the Premier offered to pay for memberships or tried to manipulate the outcome of the nomination, or did Etobicoke Centre have a special place in the Premier's heart?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, Speaker, through you to the member, I'm going to speak about government policy; I'm going to speak about the government bill on the order paper.

People in the opposition benches, people in the NDP, they want to forget about the referendum that took place on June 7; the referendum where the people of Ontario gave Premier Doug Ford and our party a clear mandate to govern, a clear mandate to make efficient and effective government. I take no lessons from New Democrats about open and accessible government.

I'm going to stand with Premier Ford and our government today—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will take their seats.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands in recess until 1 o'clock.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my honour to rise in the House to share the voices of students from Lincoln Heights Public School. Lincoln Heights alone requires over \$3 million in repairs and is one of many schools in Waterloo; across the city, over \$68 million in repairs are required.

The students wrote to me to share their concerns about cuts to school repair funding. Here's what they had to say:

Grade 4 student Ryan: "We don't have air conditioning and our classrooms get really hot.... Our windows

don't have screens, so sometimes wasps fly in on hot days. I got stung by wasps twice while in class."

His classmate Emily also wants the government to fund fixes to air conditioning.

Madison, in grade 5, says, "In my classroom, it's usually good in the winter but one time our heat broke and we had to wear our winter coats to keep warm. However, in the summertime it is so hot ... one time our classroom was so hot that our teacher was thinking of sending us home."

Kayden, aged 10, wants the government to know how difficult it was to learn after his class was moved to the cafeteria because of a ceiling leak in their classroom.

William, who just graduated from Lincoln Heights, says, "Teachers and students should be able to complete their work based on their abilities and not on the environment they are working in."

Joshua, grade 8, was blunt: "Lincoln Heights' crumbling state is a perfect example of why the school repair budget shouldn't be cut."

Thanks to the students from Lincoln Heights for speaking up. Keep using your voices to make the world a better place.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Joel Harden: This afternoon, I rise to contrast the experience of two Ontario residents. One of them lives in Ottawa.

The first person I want to talk to everyone about—her name is Bobbi Assoun. Bobbi is a 47-year-old woman who lives with chronic pain, given multiple sclerosis, and she uses a wheelchair. She is unable to maintain employment and is therefore on ODSP.

Recently, Bobbi became homeless after her daughter moved out and her monthly ODSP benefits were cut by \$428 a month.

Now Bobbi is living in an emergency shelter in Ottawa's east end, unsure if and when she can be safely housed. A cut to ODSP benefits makes her situation worse. She needs a safe home, a livable income and medicinal cannabis for her chronic pain.

Meanwhile, Mayo Schmidt, the former CEO of Hydro One, is living a much different life, thanks in part to our tax laws. After this government fired him, Schmidt's yearly income in 2018 rose to \$9 million, a significant portion of which comes from cashing out stock options in his executive contract.

At a time, when one in seven Ontarians are living in poverty, how can someone like Bobbi not have a decent home while Mayo Schmidt gets to cash out stock options with massive tax rebates? It's not right.

It's time to eliminate all forms of corporate welfare. It's time to dedicate the resources we have to lift Bobbi and other people like her out of poverty.

GEORGE HARVEY CROWELL

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I rise in the Legislature to honour a man deserving of recognition who recently

passed away. Rev. Dr. George Harvey Crowell was a remarkable man, husband, father and friend who lived a life dedicated to helping others.

An ordained Presbyterian minister, George was educated and spent the early part of his career in the United States before joining the religious studies department at the University of Windsor, where he taught social ethics until his retirement.

He focused on issues of peace and justice, environmental protection and racial harmony. For the last 20 years, he was most passionate about the need for a change in monetary policy, seeing it as an essential element for the preservation of the social safety net for all Canadians and a necessary part of maintaining a just society.

George was a dedicated activist, supporting the work of many social justice organizations, including the London and District Labour Council, the Society of Christian Ethics, the Council of Canadians and the Committee on Monetary and Economic Reform, among others.

George had been a friend of mine for many years. It was his integrity and his conscience that I always admired. Whenever we spoke, he was always well researched and steadfast in his conviction to help others.

I would like to extend my condolences to the Crowell family and all those affected by George's passing. It is a great loss to our community, but I am sure that his legacy will continue in those who remember him and in his incredible contributions.

We will miss you, George.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. John Fraser: The Basic Income Pilot was designed to find a better way to lift people out of poverty and change lives. Cancelling it is wrong and devastating to the thousands of people—families who, in good faith, took the risk and chose to join. Almost 4,000 households—single moms, families with young kids, and senior citizens—have all had the rug pulled out from underneath them. People have made decisions to go back to school, to find an apartment closer to work, or to take a new job. The Premier broke his promise to them.

Hugh Segal, former Conservative senator and principal secretary to Bill Davis, called it a "horrific" decision.

Here is the sequence of the minister's responses: It was a "tough decision"; I broke a promise; it's "fake news"; it wasn't a promise; it's going to cost \$17 billion; and some people "dropped out," to a baseless attack on my colleague from Don Valley East this morning.

These responses do nothing for the families that have been devastated by this decision. The Premier and the minister must do the right thing by these families. They must reinstate the pilot.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Doly Begum: Every single day I receive emails, messages and phone calls from the people of Scarbor-

ough Southwest with deep concerns about the Ford government's priorities. It has been two months since the provincial election, and what has the Ford government delivered to Ontario?

They have failed to deliver critically needed mental health funding, cutting \$335 million a year. They have failed to deliver overdue increases to vulnerable people on OW and ODSP, especially those in Toronto Community Housing in my riding of Scarborough Southwest. They have failed to deliver on fully researching the now-cancelled Basic Income Pilot, which could have provided those in need across Ontario with better opportunities for the future. They have failed to deliver sensible and scientific plans for the environment, cancelling the cap-and-trade program and wasting public dollars on future lawsuits. They have failed to deliver on reconciliation with Ontario First Nations. They have failed to deliver a safe and modern sex ed curriculum for Ontario students, putting children's safety at risk. They have failed to deliver on urgently needed funding to repair schools in Scarborough, putting our children's future in jeopardy. They have failed to deliver a logical and common-sense response to gun control and gun violence in our city. They have failed to deliver a government that respects democracy and the democratic freedoms and autonomy of Toronto.

What have they delivered? A buck a beer. They are willing to subsidize beer while ignoring the needs of our most vulnerable people in this province.

So on behalf of the 107,000 people of Scarborough Southwest, I am asking this government to do the right thing: Work for the people, because that's what governments are supposed to do.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

WATERWAYS ANALYSIS ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR L'ANALYSE DES COURS D'EAU

Mr. Bisson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 20, An Act to require the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to discharge the responsibilities under subsection 15 (1) of the Ontario Water Resources Act to determine the zebra mussel content of Grant Point Harbour, Grants Creek, Grants Creek Bay, Gosselin Creek, Gosselin Lake, Gosselin's Bay, Goss Lake, Goudreau Creek, Goudreau Lake, Goudy Creek, Goudy Lake, Gough Creek, Gough Lake, Gouinlock Lake, Gouin Lake, Goulais Bay, Goulais Lake, Goulais River, Gould Creek, Goulding Lake, Goulet Bay, Goulet Creek, Goulet Lake, Gourd Lake, Gourlay Lake, Gourelie Creek, Govan Lake, Gove Lake, Gover Lake, Government Bay, Government Creek, Government Lake, Governor Bay, Gowan Creek, Gowan Lake, Goward Bay, Goward Lake, Gowganda Bay, Gowganda Lake, Gowie Bay, Grabers Lake, Grab Lake,

Grace Bay, Grace Creek, Graceful Lake, Grace Lake, Gracie Lake, Grady Lake, Graff Lake, Goose Lake, Goose Neck Bay, Gooseneck Creek, Gooseneck Lake, Gooseneck Rapids, Goose Pond, Goose River, Gord Lake, Gordon Bay, Gordon Creek, Gordon Lake, Gordon Rapids, Gordons Bay and Gordons Creek / Projet de loi 20, Loi visant à exiger que le ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs assume ses responsabilités en application du paragraphe 15 (1) de la Loi sur les ressources en eau de l'Ontario pour établir la quantité de moules zébrées dans les cours d'eau suivants : Grant Point Harbour, Grants Creek, Grants Creek Bay, Gosselin Creek, Gosselin Lake, Gosselin's Bay, Goss Lake, Goudreau Creek, Goudreau Lake, Goudy Creek, Goudy Lake, Gough Creek, Gough Lake, Gouinlock Lake, Gouin Lake, Goulais Bay, Goulais Lake, Goulais River, Gould Creek, Goulding Lake, Goulet Bay, Goulet Creek, Goulet Lake, Gourd Lake, Gourlay Lake, Gourelie Creek, Govan Lake, Gove Lake, Gover Lake, Government Bay, Government Creek, Government Lake, Governor Bay, Gowan Creek, Gowan Lake, Goward Bay, Goward Lake, Gowganda Bay, Gowganda Lake, Gowie Bay, Grabers Lake, Grab Lake, Grace Bay, Grace Creek, Graceful Lake, Grace Lake, Gracie Lake, Grady Lake, Graff Lake, Goose Lake, Goose Neck Bay, Gooseneck Creek, Gooseneck Lake, Gooseneck Rapids, Goose Pond, Goose River, Gord Lake, Gordon Bay, Gordon Creek, Gordon Lake, Gordon Rapids, Gordons Bay et Gordons Creek.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1313 to 1318.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members will please take their seats.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by Clerk.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Harden, Joel	Roberts, Jeremy
Baber, Roman	Harris, Mike	Sabawy, Sheref
Babikian, Aris	Hassan, Faisal	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bailey, Robert	Khanjin, Andrea	Sattler, Peggy
Begum, Doly	Kramp, Daryl	Simard, Amanda
Berns-McGown, Rima	Kusendova, Natalia	Singh Sarkaria, Prabmeet
Bisson, Gilles	Lecce, Stephen	Singh, Gurratan
Bouma, Will	Lindo, Laura Mae	Singh, Sara
Burch, Jeff	Mantha, Michael	Smith, Todd
Coe, Lorne	Martin, Robin	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Coteau, Michael	McDonell, Jim	Surma, Kinga
Crawford, Stephen	McKenna, Jane	Tangri, Nina
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Mitas, Christina Maria	Taylor, Monique
Fee, Amy	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Fife, Catherine	Morrison, Suze	Vanthof, John
Ghamari, Goldie	Oosterhoff, Sam	Wai, Daisy
Gill, Parm	Pang, Billy	Walker, Bill
Glover, Chris	Piccini, David	Yarde, Kevin

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the table staff.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 54; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Timmins for a brief explanation of his bill.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The purpose of the bill is to require the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to discharge the responsibilities under section 15(1) of the Ontario Water Resources Act to determine the zebra mussel content of specific waterways named in the bill.

ZEBRA MUSSEL STUDY ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018

SUR L'ÉTUDE DES MOULES ZÉBRÉES

Mr. Bisson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 21, An Act to require the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to discharge the responsibilities under subsection 15 (1) of the Ontario Water Resources Act to determine the zebra mussel content of Gore Bay, Gorge Creek, Gorge Creek Falls, Gorge Lake, Gorman Creek, Gorman Lake, Gornan River, Gormans Creek, Gormire Lake, Gormley Creek, Gornupkagama Lake, Gorrie Lake, Gorr Lakes, Gorse Creek, Gorse Lake, Gort Creek, Gort Lake, Goshawk Lake, Goshen Lake, Gosling Lake, Goldie Lake, Goldie River, Goldilocks Lake, Golding Lake, Gold Lake, Gold Mountain Lake, Goldsborough Creek, Goldsborough Lake, Gold Seekers Bay, Goldsmith Lake, Goldspink Lake, Goldstein Lake, Goldthrope Lake, Goldwin Creek, Goldwin Lake, Golf Course Bay, Golf Lake, Goltz Lake, Golub Lake, Gong Creek, Gong Lake, Gooch Creek, Gooch Lake, Goodchild Creek, Goodchild Lake, Goode Lake, Goodens Creek, Gooderham Creek, Gooderham Lake, Goodeve Lake, Goodfish Lake, Good Fortune Lake, Good Harbour, Goodie Creek, Goodie Lake, Goodier Lake, Goodkey Creek and Goodlad Lake / Projet de loi 21, Loi visant à exiger que le ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs assume ses responsabilités en application du paragraphe 15 (1) de la Loi sur les ressources en eau de l'Ontario pour établir la quantité de moules zébrées dans les cours d'eau suivants : Gore Bay, Gorge Creek, Gorge Creek Falls, Gorge Lake, Gorman Creek, Gorman Lake, Gornan River, Gormans Creek, Gormire Lake, Gormley Creek, Gornupkagama Lake, Gorrie Lake, Gorr Lakes, Gorse Creek, Gorse Lake, Gort Creek, Gort Lake, Goshawk Lake, Goshen Lake, Gosling Lake, Goldie Lake, Goldie River, Goldilocks Lake, Golding Lake, Gold Lake, Gold Mountain Lake, Goldsborough Creek, Goldsborough Lake, Gold Seekers Bay, Goldsmith Lake, Goldspink Lake, Goldstein Lake, Goldthrope Lake,

Goldwin Creek, Goldwin Lake, Golf Course Bay, Golf Lake, Goltz Lake, Golub Lake, Gong Creek, Gong Lake, Gooch Creek, Gooch Lake, Goodchild Creek, Goodchild Lake, Goode Lake, Goodens Creek, Gooderham Creek, Gooderham Lake, Goodeve Lake, Goodfish Lake, Good Fortune Lake, Good Harbour, Goodie Creek, Goodie Lake, Goodier Lake, Goodkey Creek et Goodlad Lake.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1328 to 1333.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Will the members please take their seats?

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Baber, Roman	Glover, Chris	Rasheed, Kaleed
Babikian, Aris	Harden, Joel	Sabawy, Sheref
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Mike	Sandhu, Amarjot
Begum, Doly	Hassan, Faisal	Sattler, Peggy
Berns-McGown, Rima	Khanjin, Andrea	Simard, Amanda
Bisson, Gilles	Kramp, Daryl	Singh, Gurrratan
Bouma, Will	Lecce, Stephen	Singh, Sara
Burch, Jeff	Lindo, Laura Mae	Smith, Todd
Coe, Lorne	Mantha, Michael	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Coteau, Michael	Martin, Robin	Surma, Kinga
Crawford, Stephen	McDonell, Jim	Tangri, Nina
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McKenna, Jane	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Fee, Amy	Mitas, Christina Maria	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fife, Catherine	Morrison, Suze	Vanthof, John
Ghamari, Goldie	Pang, Billy	Walker, Bill
Gill, Parm	Piccini, David	Yarde, Kevin

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Downey, Doug	Oosterhoff, Sam
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The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 48; the nays are 2.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried.

First reading agreed to.

1340

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm advised that the time for introduction of bills has expired.

PETITIONS

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr. Michael Mantha: This petition is from many parents on Manitoulin Island. It says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Education oversees all school boards in the province of Ontario and as such there is an immediate need for a ministerial investigation and oversight of the Rainbow District School Board for serious contraventions contrary to the Ontario Education Act, Ontario Clean Water Act, 2006, municipal freedom of information and rights to privacy act, Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code; and

"Whereas the Rainbow District School Board, by failing to adhere to the Ontario Clean Water Act and by failing to permanently remedy the unsafe levels of lead contamination in school drinking water (33 schools), are placing our students and educators at serious risk of lead poisoning; and

"Whereas the malfeasance, systemic discrimination, abuse of power, abuse of process, excessive pay increases, incurring large legal fees to defend their malfeasance, as well as unauthorized redundant spending by the Rainbow District School Board and school administration have taken money out of the classrooms and thus have created significant negative impact on students, parents, families and the community;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To commence an immediate detailed ministerial investigation and oversight of the Rainbow District School Board, as well as a complete financial audit of school board spending since 2010, including exuberant pay increases to be conducted by the office of the provincial auditor, and detailed reports of findings to be submitted to the Ontario Legislature."

I sign this petition on behalf of the good parents of Algoma-Manitoulin.

CURRICULUM

Mr. Joel Harden: I have the same petition in two different jurisdictions. We had a busy canvassing weekend in Ottawa Centre. The first was done in my riding and the second was done at the invitation of my good friends in Ottawa West-Nepean. Some constituents in his riding asked me to come over there and petition on this matter too. The petition reads—

Interjection.

Mr. Joel Harden: Pardon me, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): You just need to read the petition without the explanation or editorial. Go ahead.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you.

"Protecting Children: Forward, Not Backward, on Sex Ed.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the health and physical education curriculum empowers young people to make informed decisions about relationships and their bodies;

"Whereas gender-based violence, gender inequality, unintended pregnancies, 'sexting,' and HIV and other

sexually transmitted infections (STIs) pose serious risks to the safety and well-being of young people;

"Whereas one in three women and one in six men experience sexual violence in Canada, and a lack of age-appropriate education about sexual health and healthy relationships leaves children and youth vulnerable to exploitation;

"Whereas one in five parents reported their own child being a victim of cyberbullying; and

"Whereas Doug Ford and the Conservative government is dragging Ontario backward, requiring students to learn an outdated sex ed curriculum that excludes information about consent, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexting, cyberbullying and safe and healthy relationships;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of Education to continue the use of the 2015 health and physical education curriculum in schools and move Ontario forward, not backward."

Speaker, I will sign both the petitions gathered in Ottawa Centre and in Ottawa West-Nepean and pass it to page Jamie for the Clerks' table.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: "Petition to Defend Democracy in Niagara.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial government has stripped the electors of their rights to vote for Niagara regional chair in the middle of an election campaign without notice or consultation; and

"Whereas this intervention in the 2018 municipal election is an affront to local democracy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to restore the election for Niagara regional chair."

I will affix my name to this petition and I will hand it to page Adam.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Sara Singh: I'd like to present this petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, entitled "Don't Take Away Our \$15 Minimum Wage and Fairer Labour Laws." I'd like to thank a constituent from the riding of Brampton South, Manraj Singh, for bringing this petition to our office.

"Whereas the vast majority of Ontarians support a \$15 minimum wage and better laws to protect workers; and

"Whereas last year, in response to overwhelming popular demand by the people of Ontario, the provincial government brought in legislation and regulations that: ...

"Make it illegal to pay part-time, temporary, casual or contract workers less than their full-time or directly hired co-workers, including equal public holiday pay and vacation pay;

"Raised the adult general minimum wage to \$14 per hour and further raises it to a \$15 minimum wage on

January 1, 2019, with annual adjustments by Ontario's consumer price index;....

"Make client companies responsible for workplace health and safety for temporary agency employees....

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour these commitments, including the \$15 minimum wage and fairer scheduling rules set to take effect on January 1, 2019. We further call on the assembly to take all necessary steps to enforce these laws and extend them to ensure no worker is left without protection."

I will affix my name to this and send it off with page Eric.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I would like to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, entitled "Stop the Cuts to Indigenous Reconciliation.

"Whereas Ontario is situated on the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples, many of whom have been on this land since time immemorial;

"Whereas in 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its final report: 'Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future' which made 94 recommendations or 'Calls to Action' for the government of Canada;

"Whereas reconciliation must be at the centre of all government decision-making;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"—continue reconciliation work in Ontario by implementing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission;

"—reinstate the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation;

"—work with First Nations leaders to sign co-operative, government-to-government accords;

"—support TRC education and community development (e.g. TRC summer writing sessions);

"—support Indigenous communities across the province (e.g. cleaning up Grassy Narrows)."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and hand it to page Jamie to bring to the Clerk.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Kevin Yarde: Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly: "Don't Take Away Our \$15 Minimum Wage and Fairer Labour Laws.

"Whereas the vast majority of Ontarians support a \$15 minimum wage and better laws to protect workers; and

"Whereas last year, in response to overwhelming popular demand by the people of Ontario, the provincial government brought in legislation and regulations that:

"Deliver 10 personal emergency leave days for all workers, the first two of which are paid;

"Make it illegal to pay part-time, temporary, casual or contract workers less than their full-time or directly hired

co-workers, including equal public holiday pay and vacation pay;

"Raised the adult general minimum wage to \$14 per hour and further raises it to a \$15 minimum wage on January 1, 2019, with annual adjustments by Ontario's consumer price index;

"Make it easier to join unions, especially for workers in the temporary help, home care, community services and building services sectors;

"Make client companies responsible for workplace health and safety for temporary agency employees;

"Provide strong enforcement through the hiring of an additional 175 employment standards officers;

"Will ensure workers have modest improvements in the scheduling of their hours, including:

"—three hours' pay when workers are expected to be on call all day, but are not called into work;

1350

"—three hours' pay for any employee whose shift is cancelled with less than two days' notice; and

"—the right to refuse shifts without penalty if the shift is scheduled with fewer than four days' notice;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour these commitments, including the \$15 minimum wage and fairer scheduling rules set to take effect on January 1, 2019. We further call on the assembly to take all necessary steps to enforce these laws and extend them to ensure no worker is left without protection."

I will affix my name to this petition and give it to page Bavan.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Doly Begum: "Stop the Cuts to Indigenous Reconciliation.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario is situated on the traditional territory of Indigenous people, many of whom have been on this land since time immemorial;

"Whereas in 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its final report: 'Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future' which made 94 recommendations or 'Calls to Action' for the government of Canada;

"Whereas reconciliation must be at the centre of all government decision-making;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"—continue reconciliation work in Ontario by implementing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission;

"—reinstate the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation;

"—work with First Nations leaders to sign co-operative, government-to-government accords;

"—support TRC education and community development (e.g. TRC summer writing sessions);

“—support Indigenous communities across the province (e.g. cleaning up Grassy Narrows).”

I’m happy to affix my signature to it and give to page Ryan-Michael.

WEARING OF POPPIES

Mr. Michael Mantha: I wear my poppy with pride and respect.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the poppy is a powerful symbol of remembrance worn by millions the world over with respect and gratitude for those who made the ultimate sacrifice to protect peace and freedom for all people;

“Whereas the poppy has been the principal emblem of the Royal Canadian Legion since its inception in 1925;

“Whereas the poppy is an enduring symbol of sacrifice that was initially inspired by the Canadian poet and soldier John McCrae while in the trenches in the Second Battle of Ypres, Belgium, during World War I;

“Whereas the use or reference to the universal poppy symbol for purposes other than remembrance and respect for fallen servicemen and women and peacekeepers worldwide may be offensive and disrespectful in the minds of their family, friends and comrades;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to: educate and promote the poppy as a universal symbol of remembrance of sacrifice, and that its heritage and origin from Canadian roots be highlighted. With this positive focus and purpose in mind,

“We further petition” the Legislative Assembly of Ontario “to demonstrate leadership in this endeavour by exemplifying respect and pride in the poppy symbol when referred to by members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and provincial political parties.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition presented to page Justin to bring it down to the Clerks’ table.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I have a petition here: “Scrapping the Basic Income Pilot Project is Not Being ‘Compassionate’ and ‘for the People.’”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the priorities of the Conservative government are dragging Ontario backwards leaving people with no basic income to those living on low income;

“Whereas the Conservative government is breaking their promises by scrapping the program they said they would keep;

“Whereas cancelling the Basic Income Pilot project will leave 4,000 people living in Thunder Bay, Lindsay, Hamilton, Brantford and Brant county with no basic income, further deteriorating their health, well-being and living conditions;

“Whereas reducing poverty in the province of Ontario does not work by decreasing the rates for Ontario’s most disadvantaged and marginalized people on Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program;

“Whereas Ontarians have a right to know about—and have a say in—the government decisions that affect them;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services to continue the Basic Income Pilot project, and to reinstate the regulatory changes that would allow people to keep more of their part-time earnings. If this government is truly for the people, then it should be for all people, including the poor.”

I will sign this petition and give it to page Aidan.

CELIAC DISEASE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the IgA TTG blood screening is the internationally recognized standard as the first step in diagnosing a person with celiac disease;

“Whereas celiac disease is an autoimmune disease that can strike people with a genetic predisposition at any time of life and presents with a large variety of non-specific signs and symptoms;

“Whereas many individuals, such as family members of diagnosed celiacs, are at ... risk and pre-symptomatic screening is advised;

“Whereas covering the cost of the simple test would dramatically reduce wait times to diagnosis, save millions to the health care system due to misdiagnoses, unnecessary testing and serious complications from untreated celiac disease and reduce the painful suffering and health decline of thousands of individuals;

“Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not to cover this blood test;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario government to cover the cost of the diagnostic blood test (IgA TTG) for celiac disease for those who show symptoms, are a first-degree relative or have an associated condition.”

I fully support this petition, sign it and give it to page Justin to deliver to the table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BETTER LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR L’AMÉLIORATION DES ADMINISTRATIONS LOCALES

Resuming the debate adjourned on August 7, 2018, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 5, An Act to amend the City of Toronto Act, 2006, the Municipal Act, 2001 and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 5, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la cité de Toronto, la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités et la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): When we last debated this motion, the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville had given a presentation. We are now moving to questions and comments relating to his presentation. Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to take this opportunity to respond in regard to his speech and overall what this bill does.

Let's not kid ourselves: This bill is a pretty vindictive piece of legislation, I would say, towards the residents of the city of Toronto, because essentially it does two things.

The first thing is, under the guise of making government more efficient, the government says it will reduce the amount of elected people. The first point is that the whole idea of how many representatives you should have at the municipal level—yes, it falls under provincial jurisdiction; however, it is always left to the municipalities to decide the size of the councils. This intrusion into what is normally a municipal duty, I think, is an intrusion on the part of the province and quite problematic in itself.

The second thing that it does—the reduction of the size of the city council is really aimed at assisting developers. They have to lobby less people in order to do things like browning the greenbelt and like building buildings and projects in areas where neighbourhoods may not want them. Currently, the city of Toronto, with their councillors, have a pretty good handle on trying to deal with planning within the city of Toronto. The councillors represent their wards and the citizens in those wards extremely well when it comes to taking local concerns into account. What this bill will do is it will reduce the amount of councillors so that all you're going to need is 13 councillors onside to be able to change the planning in the city of Toronto. Let's not kid ourselves: This has nothing to do with democracy or saving money; this is about giving developers an upper hand. It should be called out for exactly that.

The last point, the one that disappoints me the most—especially with the current minister, because I know he was in favour—is moving away from elected regional chairs. I think that is a step in a completely wrong direction and it's a vindictive move on the part of this Premier, having to do with a former leader of the Conservative Party.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Will Bouma: It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to talk about Bill 5. This government was elected by the people of Ontario to leave more money in the pockets of the taxpayers of our great province. There's not a single person in this province who, I believe, would agree that we need more politicians in this province.

In fact, if you think about it, it's very difficult for a municipal council to vote themselves out of a job. I know that when we briefly discussed about this issue at my council—because I think we could stand to lose a few council members there to make things run more efficient-

ly—we couldn't even get it past the beginning stages. The fact of the matter is that the only way that something like this can get done is if it's done at the provincial level. I've had multiple requests, in fact, from friends back home asking if we could do the same thing there.

1400

The fact is, we believe that a better local government—we're going to be able to reduce the cost and size of Toronto city hall so that decisions can be made quicker, while services can be delivered more efficiently and effectively.

When you look at the facts, Toronto city council costs a fortune. If you ask anyone on the street whether they would like to save \$25 million that could go into services and things like that, they would be more than happy to agree with you on that. When you look at that cost and what the cost is here for an MPP, it just makes sense that you have 25 federal MPs, 25 MPPs and 25 councillors to deal with a region.

In short, all I can say is that we're doing this for the people, most people are in favour of it, and I look forward to passing this legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, this legislation is not, in any way, shape or form, for the people. It's forcing it on the people. You know for a fact that when a government decides to push something on a municipality without consultation, it's not for the people.

We know that there's a reason behind the motivation for this legislation. Coming here to this Legislature and prioritizing things like cancelling the cap-and-trade, decreasing the increase for OW and ODSP recipients, cancelling the pilot project, ripping up contracts, sending people back to work around a strike that is their constitutional right—it's not for the people. It's not a Better Local Government Act. This is a government that is about self-centred policy. Pushing their agenda onto the people of Toronto is wrong-headed and it's the wrong move.

Democracy needs to happen. Representation needs to be had. People are feeling that if you are going to force this legislation and change the level of representation on them, they should have a say, and rightfully so.

I don't know how your leader allows you to speak in your caucus meetings, if you're allowed to talk and—actually, does he consult with you in your caucus meetings, or is it more of a top-down kind of management? Because that's how it feels in this House. This Legislature is like a top-down—they don't want to hear from this side of the House, and they don't want to hear from the people of Toronto, whom their legislation is going to affect. Forcing legislation on people is not a way to govern.

Again, I don't know how you manage your caucus, but it sounds like your Premier doesn't give you much respect.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member from Niagara West will come to order.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: That wasn't me.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. David Piccini: Let's be completely honest here. When we look at the redistribution, this government was elected on a mandate of trust, accountability and to reduce the size of government.

Let's look at the real origins. I know that the member is not listening to me now, but let's look at the real origins as to some of her inflammatory language. It's inflammatory to disguise the real reason here, which is that when Toronto city council expanded to 47 wards, it was a deeply, deeply flawed process. OMB hearings show that options to prioritize voter parity were dismissed to most benefit incumbent councillor members and that fewer than 2,000 people were consulted on this.

We know that the real reason they're so up in arms is because they want to defend their activist friends. They want to defend their activist friends, who will not get a mandate from the people in the same manner we just got a mandate from Ontarians in the last election. Their activist friends are angry because they know that when they actually go to the people, when they have to get organized, when they have to take it to the people of the city, they'll categorically reject them, the same way they categorically rejected the NDP platform in the last election, Mr. Speaker. That's the real issue here.

We've got a plan, and that plan is going to reduce the size of government. It's going to ensure that the dysfunctional city council gets back to work to ensure that council moves on gridlock, moves on affordable housing, and ensures parity at the provincial and federal levels. Mr. Speaker, this is in the best interests of Ontarian taxpayers, and I'm proud to support this bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes the questions and comments for this round, but I would remind all members that questions and comments are intended to relate back to the speech that was just given by the member, the substantial speech, whether it be 20 minutes or 10 minutes—questions and comments to the member who just spoke, not a series of short speeches, two minutes long, touching generally on the debate.

I'll now return to the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville to respond to the speech that we just had.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: On July 31, I had asked the question of how much a referendum will cost. Our honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing graciously provided the response. Mr. Speaker, we know that in 2012, the city staff indicated that a special referendum would cost as much as an election, or roughly, approximately \$7 million. For comparison, in 2014, the Toronto election cost approximately \$8.3 million. So here's the question I would like to ask taxpayers: Would they rather spend \$7 million to \$8 million on a referendum asking if you should keep more politicians, or would you rather save \$25 million?

Hearing those numbers, I'm surprised anyone would actually think it's a good idea to spend millions of dollars on a referendum. I'm sure taxpayers would rather have

councillors at city hall taking actions to improve their everyday lives, and not wasting time and money on a costly referendum, than investing about \$25 million.

Mr. Speaker, I always say it is about our present but also it is about our children's future—and not only our children; it is about our grandchildren's and great-grandchildren's future. That is the reason why it is so important for us to pass this bill and save approximately \$25 million so our future generations can benefit from it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Jeff Burch: It's a pleasure to get up and speak about this undemocratic and atrocious bill which has really stirred the hornet's nest in Niagara. I was inspired by my friend from Toronto—Danforth last week, who very ably summed up the bill, labelling it an abuse of the Premier's vast political power, cooked up in the backroom, and with no consultation whatsoever.

There's no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that it is an abuse of the Premier's vast political power to interfere in municipal elections in the middle of those elections. It was obviously cooked up in the backroom as it targets certain people, and it was done with no consultation whatsoever. The government side knows that they did not campaign on this during the election.

My friend described the bill as unusual and dangerous because it allows the minister of housing and urban affairs to further amend this bill in the future. The minister will be able to write regulations that supersede any act that we put forward in this House, and this gives the minister extraordinary and dangerous powers. It strips power from the city of Toronto and puts it in the hands of one man, the minister—or, as we know, the Premier.

I'm going to concentrate much of my speech on schedule 2. Schedule 2 provides that for the 2018 regular election, the head of council of certain regional municipalities shall be elected, except for Niagara, Peel, Muskoka and York. Those regions can decide to elect their chairs in the future. It seems that, so far, Toronto is the only place the Premier is totally taking over. In the regions, the Premier is only going to impose his will in this election so that he can perform a couple of political drive-bys on his opponents Patrick Brown and Steve Del Duca.

1410

So there are three very different approaches that are being taken in this bill, contradictory approaches: (1) complete control of the city of Toronto—

Mrs. Robin Martin: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

Mrs. Robin Martin: The member opposite is imputing motives, which is prohibited under rule 23(h), I believe. That is prohibited by the rules.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you for drawing that to the Chair's attention. Yes, it is against the rules to impute motive. I would caution the member and ask him to now continue.

Mr. Jeff Burch: So there are three very different approaches, contradictory approaches, in this one bill.

One is total control. Another is, "Well, we're going to control you for this election, but you can do what you want in the next election." And the other is, "You can do what you want as a region." It's not that hard to see why my friend from Toronto–Danforth described it as written on the back of a cocktail napkin: It's all over the place.

How can this be explained? Well, I think that he was correct that it's all about rejection. All you have to do—and we've talked about it in the House before—is read *Crazy Town* by Robyn Doolittle or *Uncontrollable* by Mark Towhey to figure out what this is all about. The Premier was a one-term wonder on Toronto council and was frozen out due to incompetence and the erratic behaviour and embarrassing behaviour of him and his brother.

He was rejected as mayor, and was rejected again by Toronto in the provincial election. In Toronto—and the Premier had his numbers mixed up—the NDP won 400,443 votes and the PCs 359,909 votes, for a difference of 40,000 votes; another rejection from the city of Toronto.

Speaker, it's not just about rejection. It's not just about getting back at political enemies. It's also about money. It's about Conservatives seizing power to make life easier for their developer friends, to cut down on those pesky debates about—

Mrs. Robin Martin: Point of order.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We've got two points of order. I'll listen to Eglinton–Lawrence first.

Mrs. Robin Martin: On a point of order, again, understanding order 23(i)—I had it wrong last time—they're imputing motive again, and that is prohibited.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you, yes. I'll again ask the member to stop imputing motive in his speech. If he continues, we will have to move on.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On a point of order, the member for Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We're using the exact language that the Premier has used at question period in defending his government, so how can it be out of order? It's the same language.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): You can't impute motive; that's clear in the standing orders. I would again caution the member not to impute motive in his remarks. If he continues, I will have to move on.

The member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Cutting down on pesky debates about safer neighbourhoods, healthier communities, livable cities, conservation—which I'll talk about—preserving heritage buildings, respecting culture: Those are things that get in the way of profit for developers and other friends.

So how did Niagara and Muskoka fit into this tale? I'm from Niagara, and I remember with a cold chill a video of this Premier—

Mr. Lorne Coe: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Another point of order, the member for Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: It's been clear. We're citing 23(i) of the standing orders. The Speaker opposite continues to use references that impute the motivation and characterization of individuals. It is not consistent with what the standing orders call. I would ask for a ruling, please.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On that point of order—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll listen to the member for Timmins on the point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, I hear well what the honourable member across the way is saying, but, as the old saying goes, "What's good for the goose is good for the gander." That same type of attack is used day in and day out by the Premier of this province at question period. I don't see him being taken under control and saying that he can't do it. So if it's good for the Premier, it should be good for our member—or rule him out of order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The House will come to order. The member for Timmins will come to order. The Minister of Municipal Affairs will come to order. The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound will come to order. The member for Northumberland–Peterborough South will come to order.

Just to be clear, it is against the standing orders to impute motive. If anyone, in the course of this debate, is imputing motive again and ignores the ruling of the Chair, I will move on.

The member for Niagara Centre has the floor.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just getting into an actual—it's not imputing; it's an actual videotape of the Premier during the election. I remember with a cold chill the video of this Premier in a backroom with his friends talking about carving up the greenbelt. It's on video. He was licking his chops and his friends were sitting around watching him talk about carving up the greenbelt. It's on video. There's nothing imputing about what I'm doing.

In Niagara, as in many regions, what happens is that developers get together with political operatives. They supply the money; political operatives supply the party machinery. They elect certain people to regional council. They get the chair appointed, which is what this bill is about. They get members of the conservation authority in the area appointed. They get other people, like the CAO of that region, appointed. And they control things. It's all about control, and that's what this debate is about. It's about control. It's about getting control so that people with money—

Mrs. Robin Martin: Speaker, on a point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On a point of order, the member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mrs. Robin Martin: On a point of order: He's again imputing motive, as well as he is not, under 23(b), directing his speech to a matter which is under discussion.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Speaker is listening very carefully to the presentation. Since I asked him to stop imputing motive, I have not heard him im-

pute motive. He still has the floor. He's got 10 minutes to go. Again, any member who is imputing motive—it's got to stop, and if it continues, we're going to have to move on.

Member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'm trying really hard. I guess I hit a sore spot over there.

For the past five years, many of the members in this House have listened to former Welland MPP Cindy Forster rally to bring accountability and transparency to the regional government of Niagara. We've had ongoing issues with cabals, corruption and controversy. Many popular Conservative—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw the unparliamentary—

Mr. Jeff Burch: Withdraw.

Not long ago, a regional chair was appointed. What we had next was a series of corrupt activities that are being—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member can take his seat.

Further debate.

Mr. David Piccini: I'm pleased to rise in support of this bill and to share a few comments. The origins of this bill really stem into a commitment and a promise we made Ontarians in the last election. It stems to a promise for more accountability. It stems to a promise to restore trust in government. That was a commitment we made to Ontarians because—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Timmins.

1420

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He's imputing motive about the legislation. I don't think that should be allowed under standing order 34.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member has the floor.

Mr. David Piccini: —because over the previous 15 years, Ontarians were subject to a number of issues: the Financial Accountability Officer, who regularly had clashes with the previous government—we knew about the \$11-billion budget deficit, and of course, the previous government had said it was \$6 billion; trials of senior staffers; Ornge; the gas plants scandal. All of that spoke to the cynicism and the lack of trust in government.

At the door when I was knocking, a lot of people just slammed it. It's not myself; it could have been any of the other candidates. That was because they had a fundamental lack of trust in our political figures. I think that is actually a shame for all of us who get elected to this place.

We were elected to restore that trust and accountability. We know Ontarians aren't looking for more politicians. They're looking for fewer politicians.

When we talk about restoring trust and accountability in government, it was clear on June 7 that we were elected to deliver on this mandate. We were elected to end the culture of scandal, waste and mismanagement.

When we look at Toronto city council—I just want to take you back to a recent trip: hillsides, vineyards, gondola rides and restaurants. No, as someone of Italian descent, that sadly was not my trip; that was council's trip to Italy—at the expense of who? None other than the Toronto taxpayer.

I want to draw this back to the taxpayers' cynicism in elected officials. When we see examples like this, lavish trips to the Italian countryside—I just got off the phone last night with an Italian family of mine. They didn't even sip wine at those fancy vineyards. Yet it's good enough for Toronto city councillors at the taxpayers' expense.

Again, when we knocked on doors across the GTA, it was clear. People said, "We're not looking for more politicians; we're looking for fewer politicians." So we are acting on that mandate to restore accountability and trust.

Nobody in Ontario believes that we don't have enough politicians, that we need more. We have oversized councils that fundamentally make it impossible to build meaningful consensus. The result? We've seen it. Many of us—although I'm not from Toronto—now coming to the Legislature, witness this firsthand: infrastructure gridlock, crumbling infrastructure, a housing backlog, transit not being built. This is Canada's largest municipal government, and it's dysfunctional. King Street, the Sheppard extension, the Steeles extension: It's not getting done.

We've got to ensure that council truly works for the people. When we talk about our theme, "For the people," about ensuring that we're working for the people, we have to ensure that we have a council that works for the people. When we talk about the people, it's not activist friends. It's not people who are so concerned about their political futures that they lobby heavily to the opposition to say, "Please. We're so disorganized. We're not going to win on a mandate by the people, so we need you to lobby for us, to keep a bloated government, to ensure activist friends are looked after."

We were elected, again, on a mandate to crack down on that, to ensure that taxpayer dollars are respected, to ensure that we're a government that works for the people and that we're nimble and we're efficient, and this makes sense. In fact—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The member is impugning motive about our party with regard to what our motives are or are not about something. That should be held to account.

You want to go there?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I will caution the member. He can't impute motive either. As he saw, if he continues to do that, we will move on.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will withdraw my comment about the activist friends.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Sorry. Point of order, the member for Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You don't withdraw in that way. You either withdraw or you don't. That's the practice around here. That's just trying to be cute.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member again to withdraw.

Mr. David Piccini: Withdraw.

Mr. Speaker, I'd invite this Legislature, this place, to look no further than councillors who themselves have said that things aren't working in an efficient manner. Councillor Thompson, of course, said, "It's hard to get us to make decisions. The business of Toronto could be done in a more timely, efficient manner"—and, Mr. Speaker, here's the kicker—"if we had fewer people talking about the same things over and over."

Mr. Speaker, it's a clear endorsement of this government's plan to reduce the size of Toronto council.

I know we're so focused on the city here, but if we look beyond the city and outside of the GTA to areas like my riding and areas like Alnwick/Haldimand township—I just wrapped up, over the last few weeks, a series of meetings with mayors about this very bill. Before I even got into the government's rationale, one of the first things the mayor of Alnwick/Haldimand said was that they proactively reduced the size of council.

Mr. Speaker, these are the councillors, these are the townships that we've got to look towards that are setting best practices. These councillors aren't on six-figure salaries, taking lavish trips to Italy. These are councillors earning what most people earn in a month, in two months, to serve the constituents of my riding on a yearly basis, working exceptionally hard, working, delivering more with less. They're doing an incredible job for our rural community, Mr. Speaker, and they're proactively recognizing that when you're dealing with a nimble and effective council, you're getting things done.

I don't know why anybody in this place would stand up and defend a bloated, oversized government. It's a question, honestly: why they would stand up and defend increasing the size—a large, bloated, inefficient city council. The people of Ontario will not stand for that. That's why the people of Ontario elected this government to deliver on our mandate to restore trust and accountability in government.

Now to speak to the merits of this bill. This is being done in a fair and timely manner. We're going to extend the nomination deadline, of course, to September 14 to allow councillors to decide where they truly want to run. Of course, this will be done in effect for the fall election, and we know this is going to save the taxpayer \$25 million. Now, think: If I look back to things that members of the opposition on the opposite side have talked about, about housing, about transit, we can truly better deliver on these initiatives with a smaller council, taking the savings that we were elected on a mandate to provide and invest those things into infrastructure, invest them into things like affordable housing.

Again, if one is running for council and they're organized, they have a mandate that will be supported by the people. I do not understand why the opposition

members are so scared to have councillors take this mandate to the people and get elected, because we know that with 25 councillors, those who are organized, those who are running on a positive, clear message—the same way we ran on a message to restore accountability and trust in government—are going to get elected. If they're confident in anyone running for council—if they have a strong message, they'll get elected.

To take it back to the promise we made during the campaign to restore trust and accountability, this really takes it back to broader themes in the last election, and that is bigger government or smaller government. There was a very clear contrast on June 7 between big government and small government. This is yet another example of our commitment to Ontarians to deliver smaller, more efficient government.

If we look at those living on income support, those businesses burdened by red tape, we're going to drastically reduce the number of regulatory and red tape burdens that were on the backs of our small businesses. That's why they supported us in the last election, to reduce the size of government, to get governments off their backs so that they could get on with the business of innovating, of employing Ontarians, of getting our province back to the prosperity that it was once known for.

If we look at health care again—big versus small government—the bureaucratization of our health care system, the increasing sizes of our LHINs: What is that doing? That's taking away from the ability of our health care professionals to deliver patient-centred care. I heard this from nursing groups; I heard this from our health care professionals.

1430

Again, to tie it back to this bill: This is again our commitment to reduce the bureaucracy, to reduce the size of government. Again, we don't need more politicians; we need fewer politicians. We don't need more bureaucrats in the health care system; we need more health care professionals.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You're calling elected officials "bureaucrats." Why don't you resign, then?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins will please come to order.

Mr. David Piccini: That's why we've introduced legislation, as well, to get the students back to work. The member opposite had spoken earlier about things the government is not doing. Mr. Speaker, let's look at all the things this government has done, coming back to work in the summer. We've brought the students back at York University. We've invested in their future. We're ensuring that we're going to get more of our nursing students out into the workforce so that we can deliver patient-centred care. We've restructured the hydro CEO. We've restructured Hydro One to replace the broken system that members opposite propped up over the last 15 years—the Liberal government.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Come on. We've fought them every step of the way.

Mr. David Piccini: You know you did. I know you're angry. I know you're angry we've moved swiftly—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member can take his seat. First of all, he has to make his remarks through the Chair and not react to the opposition in the way he has. Secondly, he has to make sure that his remarks are relevant to the bill.

The member has the floor.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To take this back again to our commitment, the commitments we made during this election: One of the clear commitments was to restore trust and accountability in government. That means trust and accountability in reducing the size of government. That also means restructuring Hydro One, restoring trust and accountability in government to ensure that we have a hydro system that works for Ontarians, that provides relief, lowering the bills for our businesses.

The carbon tax, as well, Mr. Speaker: a commitment we made to ensure that we're not aggressively taxing Ontarians. I know that it's tiring to hear of our commitments to reducing the regulatory burden, to lowering taxes. We want to reduce the size of government, for those members opposite, and we've made a commitment to restoring Toronto city council, to restructuring it.

Mr. Speaker, if anyone who has looked back at the debates over the past number of years, at the increasing size of Toronto city council—let's look at when they went to 47 councillors. I look at Andrew Sancton, who's a professor from Western University: "When we look at the decision to expand council"—a point and an argument so strongly defended by members of the opposition—"it reflected those who actually wanted to expand council, those Ontarians who came out, those Torontonians who got involved."

How many, Mr. Speaker, were so committed, who said, "We need more politicians. We're going to come out and get involved in this"? Fewer than 2,000 Torontonians. That's about 0.1% of the city's 1.8 million electors. That means that the recommendations are based on, Mr. Speaker, "the views of a tiny and self-selecting group of engaged citizens and city councillors." That's a quote taken from that professor.

I just don't understand. This place is meant to work for the people. Why are the members opposite so intent on increasing the size of government, on supporting a bloated 47-person council? I don't understand, Mr. Speaker. It's the same thing—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order: the member for Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The member is imputing motive, clearly. That's not allowed by the standing orders.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I don't [inaudible] was in that case. The member has the floor.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was not. I'm just simply asking why, in this debate, the members opposite do support a 47-council municipality in Toronto. They support that. We want to reduce that

size. We want to ensure that it's an efficient, nimble, accountable government.

When we look broader—again, to take you back to larger-versus-smaller government. This is a theme we've seen: larger city councils supporting more politicians, bloated government. Again, looking at the curriculum we're implementing, an apparent intent to not engage our parents—it would be fundamentally wrong that this government wouldn't go back and consult Ontarians. We're not going to execute our policy based on tiny self-selecting activist groups in this government. We're not going to do that. We're committed to acting in the best interest of Ontarians. It was a mandate we were clearly given in the last election.

When we look at why we're doing this, to ensure that we have an accountable government, to ensure that there are fewer politicians and that we can get decisions done, and if we look at the way this will be structured, to provide 25 members of Parliament, 25 members of provincial Parliament and 25 councillors, this will ensure streamlined work among the various levels of government. A taxpayer, approaching any level, can engage with the same boundaries. This takes the decision-making out of this to the electoral commission; not out of self-selecting groups, but to the independent electoral commission on boundaries and future expansion on this. That's the right way to do it.

This government was elected on a mandate to restore trust and accountability and to ensure that we're putting the people first. When we knocked on doors in the last election—I know I can speak on behalf of members on this side of the House and the members on that side of the House who were elected. Of course, we know why we have so many members elected: because the people in Ontario spoke loud and clear. They said, "We don't want more politicians. We don't want government interfering in all aspects of our lives. We want to get government off our back. We want to ensure that government truly works for the people and that it's done in an efficient manner."

We know that with this \$25 million in savings, we're going to deliver better services, better infrastructure, affordable housing. We're going to match that commitment—the \$3.8 billion, of course—that we invested and we committed in the last election to affordable housing, to mental health.

This is what the people of the greater Toronto area want, Mr. Speaker. This is what Ontarians wanted when they elected so many members of the Progressive Conservative Party on June 7. It was a categorical rejection of larger government. It was a categorical rejection of more politicians. They wanted a Premier and a government that spoke to them: people working harder and getting less, seeing those taxpayer dollars going to the lavish trips that I spoke about, seeing the money squandered and wasted. This Premier spoke to them. He struck a chord when he said that we're going to reduce the size of government and we're going to restore trust and accountability.

Mr. Speaker, when I hear the language used in question period, the number of times you have had to step

up—yes, you did it to me earlier, but on a general note here, when I listen to the NDP opposite in question period, it brings a smile to my face and reminds me of *ad hominem*. Something Prime Minister Thatcher said was that when one personally doesn't have a single political argument left, they use the inflammatory language that we've so often heard over the past number of days to describe a prudent decision this government is making.

The reason we're doing this—

Laughter.

Mr. David Piccini: I know—the chuckles and the laughter.

We're putting the people first. We're reducing the number of politicians. The reason we're doing this is so that we have a government of the people, by the people, for the people. That shall never perish, the character of a smaller government, to ensure we're listening to the people and to ensure that we have a government that respects taxpayer dollars.

This government has made a commitment to the people of Ontario that when we got elected we were going to move quickly, and that's just what we've done. I know it offends the sensibilities of members opposite to see us acting on those promises, to see us acting on the commitment we made to Ontarians when we got elected that we're going to reduce the size of government, restore trust and accountability, and reduce Toronto city council. I've heard nothing but support when I go door to door. I know the Premier said that we're going to get out in Toronto, too, and go door to door. The people of Toronto want this. They don't want more politicians. They don't want more insider activist friends in Toronto city council. They want fewer politicians. They want an efficient government, and that's what we're going to bring.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments related to the presentation by the member for Northumberland–Peterborough South?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I just wanted to touch on three things from my friend opposite. First, I wanted to be clear that what the NDP supports are the voices of the Torontonians and the voices of people from Muskoka, Niagara, Peel and York, who have the right to decide how they're governed and what that composition of government looks like.

1440

I'd also like to point out, as my second point, that when thinking specifically about Toronto, there has to be some kind of mechanism included that would ensure that however many councillors actually look like and represent the diversity of the Toronto area. Not only do I think it's problematic that we're not allowing Torontonians to make a decision about what that composition is or how many people represent them so that they feel they can go and speak to somebody when they have an issue that's regional; I think there is a huge concern that with the decrease of councillors, there will not be the diversity that they've been striving to have on city council.

One suggestion would be to use some form of an equity lens to ensure that among the 25 councillors,

there's an actual representation that's as diverse as the Toronto area. That's one of the reasons why many of the people who have put their names forward have been, in large part, diverse people who were stepping up to the plate for the first time.

The third thing I'd like to point out is that leadership has nothing to do with the numbers; it has to do with the people at the helm deciding that they are going to lead with integrity, honesty and accountability. If they can't do that, it doesn't matter how many people are sitting at that table.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: As I speak, I wish to beg the indulgence of the House. I have a bit of a summer cold going on, so it might make it a little more difficult.

I did want to touch base on something. The NDP is really hitting the snare drum on this particular issue. I think it's important to note that in Niagara, as much as the NDP members from that region—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to remind the member that he is to make comments in relation to the presentation that was just given by his colleague the member for Northumberland–Peterborough South, not to debate the NDP.

The member has the floor.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Absolutely. I think it's so important that I recognize that the member's speech was really a distinct separation from the vision that was presented by the opposition in the past election. Today, the member from Northumberland spoke about something that is integral to not only the people in his riding and the people of Toronto, but also the people in Niagara West and the broader Niagara region, which is ensuring that we're reducing the cost and the size of government, increasing efficiencies within those governments, whatever level that might be, and showing respect for the taxpayer.

In the Niagara region, I know I have received a lot of support for this plan. In fact, I have here Rob, who emailed me. He said, "I applaud your government's initiative on reducing the size of Toronto city council. I would urge and support a similar initiative for the region of Niagara, where we are increasing the size of council from 31 to 33" councillors "for 450,000 people."

It's clear that there is definitely an appetite within our province for change. Although the NDP might not wish to recognize it, as we've heard from the member today in his speech as well, it's important that we listen to the people. As much as the NDP might not want to, the people did speak on June 7. Their voice was very clear—that they wanted a government that was going to be effective and efficient. I believe the changes we're making today will reduce inefficiencies also at the Niagara regional council and make it more accountable to the people.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for St. Catharines.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you to the people of Niagara I'm

speaking for: I said I'd be their voice and I'm going to be.

The members on the other side of the floor seem to think that government is all about numbers. That's not what the government is about. The government is about representing the people. Just because you decrease the number of politicians doesn't mean that you're going to get representation.

In Niagara, I was a city councillor for 14 years. We debated decreasing the number of councillors in St. Catharines, and I'll tell you, the people in St. Catharines spoke and we did not decrease the numbers of any politicians in Niagara. We made sure that we had representation by population, and representation by population is the democratic right of the voters.

What happened at the eleventh hour last Friday was undemocratic, autocratic and unfair to any of the candidates who put their name forward for the regional chair in Niagara. Those people who put their name forward put it forward for a reason. They wanted to represent Niagara at large. They wanted to make sure that the number of politicians was representing the exact amount of people within Niagara.

Mr. Speaker, I question how much consultation was actually done by the members of the other side within the Niagara region, because I don't think any was done to see if the Niagara chair was to be elected at large. When I knocked on doors, the residents of St. Catharines said loud and clear that they wanted a Niagara regional chair elected at large so that they had their democratic right and they had their say on the ballot.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I'm glad to stand up and support this bill as a former city councillor from the city of Markham for 20 years. He talked about bringing effectiveness in every sense for the council and the local government. I could talk for more than two minutes, but my time is two minutes.

We committed to restoring accountability and trust in government. We also promised to reduce the size and the cost of the government and to end the culture of waste and mismanagement. Normally in Ontario, we believe that we don't have enough politicians; in fact, it is the opposite. We believe in better local government. We are going to reduce the size and cost of Toronto city hall so that decisions can be made quicker while services can be delivered more efficiently and effectively.

When I started talking about widening Steeles Avenue east of Markham Road—if anybody drives on Steeles Avenue east of Markham Road all the way to the Pickering line, it is a bottleneck. For the last 10 years, people were dying on that street. I was a local councillor at the time. I had been talking to the region of York. We had passed a resolution at the city of Markham unanimously, and we asked the region to deal with the city of Toronto to widen Steeles Avenue east of Markham Road. Steeles Avenue is 100% owned by the city of Toronto. They have it in writing; so far they have done nothing.

York region and the city of Toronto have talked the last 10 years; it's like a political football. The reason I'm saying this is, it's the big size of the government at the city of Toronto. There's no talking.

I came across a head-on collision on Steeles Avenue. This is one example—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

The member for Northumberland–Peterborough South can now respond.

Mr. David Piccini: I thank all of the members for their two-minute remarks on this bill and appreciate all their comments.

I've got to address the flippant remark on numbers over there from the member of the opposition on the opposite side. I know that they don't really care much about skyrocketing numbers—skyrocketing hydro. Of course, they were quite content to prop the previous government up when skyrocketing hydro bills were plaguing the people of Ontario. They want a bloated government, larger councils, bigger government, and we know they support higher taxes, regressive taxes, that disproportionately hurt the very people they claim to represent.

I want to talk about another number: the 2.3 million Ontarians who sent 76 Progressive Conservative members to this place in the last election—so many that we've got to have them on the opposite side as well as this side—who elected us on a mandate to restore trust and accountability in government, who elected us on a mandate to reduce the size of government, and Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we're going to do. There are 25 members who represent the GTA. That's going to deliver more effective services for the people of Toronto.

When we want to talk about the diversity that the member opposite represented too, I see 25 members in this place from both sides of the House, all parties, who represent the GTA with incredible diversity and incredible ability. I don't see any inability there to represent our people.

We're going to align this in Toronto with the feds and with the province. We're going to deliver better services. We're going to restore trust and accountability in government. I know it offends the sensibilities, as I've often said, of the members opposite to think that we would actually have fewer politicians, to think that we would put the power back in the hands of the people—reduce the number of politicians, shrink the size of government and ensure that money is better spent and in the pocket of the taxpayers.

1450

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you for the opportunity to rise and talk about Bill 5 this afternoon.

I made a commitment in my maiden speech in this place and I'm going to try to honour it. The commitment that I made in my maiden speech was that I was going to try my best to resurrect some humanity in this business.

I understand, given the nature of this place—the adversarial nature of this place—how passionate people are in this place, that we tend to beat each other up a little bit,

and I think a certain amount of that is fine. But I think this bill is really important, and I think a lot of ideas have been expressed in this place, including, most recently, by my friend the member from Northumberland—Peterborough South, and expressed with great passion.

But what I often find here is that we're talking past each other. Maybe we're talking past each other because that's convenient to be able to score a perceived political point, or maybe we're talking past each other because that's the reflex of modern debate. But, as I said, in talking about Bill 5, I think it's important to resurrect some humanity and actual exchange on this bill, because it's a seismic change for the city of Toronto. It is important for the city that I was born in, personally, as an elected representative now from downtown Ottawa, to be able to express ideas that connect with the gravity and the severity of this bill.

My friend mentioned that the perception—and I'm just commenting on the words that were said—from the government side is that they believe we're opposed to this bill because we love, as he said, big government; that we want more politicians. I'm going to try to express my remarks this afternoon in language which I think will connect across the aisle. I'm going to call this speech the consultation and efficiencies speech, Speaker. I'm going to try to speak in language that all of us can relate to and understand.

When we think about consultation in this party—or at least people that I have worked with in my community and in other communities—we think about a process by which people can have informed consent, people can have due notice, people can make adjustments to their lives.

It would appear to me that Bill 5 has set in place a significant change in the composition of Toronto city council. Again, I understand that it's being made because my friends on the opposite side of the aisle are suggesting we need to do it; that we must do it; enough dithering; Ontario has the largest subnational debt in the world. We need to figure out a way to find more money for urgent public services, and that will happen if we save \$25 million in reducing the size of Toronto city hall. I'm trying to connect to that passion. I hope you hear that, because I'm listening. But the problem is, it is very difficult for citizens in Toronto to understand the persuasive taste for that during an election. I hope you've heard that as we've critiqued the bill.

Had you presented this as something that could take effect for the next municipal election, had you had the foresight to consider that we need to make sure that when candidates in the future are running for office, for school board or for municipal council, that they have the foresight—because, let's be honest, all of us in this room are serious. We all built teams; we all raised money; we all mentored people to be effective community leaders. That's the way all of us got elected. People have been doing that work in the city of Toronto and in all the other jurisdictions that were named by the council chairs for eight or nine months.

So I ask, on the note of consultation: Which one of us would have liked the rules of the game for us changed in the middle of the provincial election, two or three months outside of the outcome? I think we would have been justifiably outraged.

I think the commitments that people in Ottawa Centre made to me—with money, with time—they would have been, to be honest, insulted at the notion that we would change the composition of this Legislature three months before the actual election. I think we would have all been justifiably outraged had there been an oversight capacity in this place like there is for the city of Toronto's elections and the various regional chairs. We would have been outraged.

But that is not, in my opinion—I really feel like my friends haven't connected enough to that point. I wonder how many of them right now would be willing to forsake the seat they honourably hold in this place because of their commitment to reduce the amount of politicians in this country, in this province, in the city of Toronto—wherever. I really hope that on the issue of consultation, we take this word to heart, because I think there are moments at which you can appreciate—and I'm saying this directly to my friends on the opposite side of the House—the legacy by community organizers in your own party.

I don't mind saying—and it may come as a surprise to you—that in 2014, when my friend Olivia Chow ran for mayor of Toronto, and the person who was the most well-organized candidate opposite Olivia, Rob Ford, was waging his election campaign, doing so at the same time that he was publicly wrestling incredible demons, Speaker, it was tough for me, somebody whose own family has struggled with drug abuse and alcohol abuse, to watch the decomposition of a politician on television and think of the family and think of the people involved. I've got to tell you, I had a lot of my friends on the left sharing with me memes and messages insulting Rob Ford, making fun of his misfortune and what he was struggling with in the context of that mayoral election—and I didn't like it. I didn't like it. I told my friends who call themselves members of the left, “We don't laugh at other people's misfortune. We don't make fun of people for their appearance. And we certainly don't make fun of people for addiction to substances. We don't.”

Addiction is a mental health issue. It's a health care issue. It is not a criminal justice issue and it's certainly not an issue where any one of us should ridicule each other. So I don't mind telling you, Speaker, that in the middle of that I had sent some help to my friend Olivia, although I lived in a different city, but I asked my department chair at the time, at Carleton University, the department of law and legal studies—I walked up to him as a lowly sessional. We're low on the ranking when it comes to the department. But I said to him, “I'd like \$1,000 because I'd like to go to Etobicoke-Rexdale and I'd like to talk to voters because everything I've heard about Rob Ford leads me to believe that he's a serious community organizer who knows his people, and I want

to appreciate that. I'm actually dismayed by what I'm seeing in civic politics in Toronto, by the way friends of mine are using this moment to chastise or belittle Mayor Ford."

I had to go through an approval process. I agreed to do a paper and do a brown-bag talk to the department about it. But I got that \$1,000 and I jumped on the train and I went to Etobicoke-Rexdale. I went to the Steak Queen and I went to the Walmart parking lot and I walked around the Albion mall. I talked to people about Rob Ford, and as Rob Ford was decomposing and coming apart at the seams on international news, they identified with him. I did 55 street interviews with a videographer friend of mine. They identified with him. It would not be a stretch of language, Speaker, to say they loved him.

I talked to 55 people in two days; I heard two people critical of the mayor's record. They all identified with him. When I probed further to ask why, they said:

"We love Rob Ford because he listens to us."

"We have his personal cellphone number."

"He's walked the streets of my community."

"He's been in the Albion mall."

"He's had his hair cut at my hair salon."

At that moment, it was very clear to me—I had been doing community organizing outside electoral politics for 20 years—that this is a community organizer. This is someone who listens. But he did so, Speaker, with a relevance to Bill 5, in the context of the ward boundaries that Toronto has. He did so in a context where people could have access to him. And what I encourage my friends on the opposite side of the aisle to contemplate, given that legacy, which the Premier has benefited from and contributed to as well: What are we going to do to future representatives of this great city in a context where we dramatically reduce the access of elected representatives?

To me, the answer is very clear: People will want to talk to their municipal councillor. They are more likely to get a staff person or somebody working in an unelected capacity, perhaps. And I think that diminishes the business. I think it does. I think there are certain things worth investing in, and political representation is one of them.

So when I took the train back and got my paper written and brown-bag seminar prepared for my department, I was prepared to tell all of my leftist professoriate friends that I was impressed and surprised by the depth and tenacity of Mayor Ford's constituency operation in his own riding and across the city. I was prepared to acknowledge good organizing when I saw it. Even if I disagreed with his politics, I was prepared to acknowledge the model that I saw.

1500

Here's where we can switch—and I'm offering free advice, for which there will be no invoice, because I know that my friends are very interested in efficiencies too. They've couched Bill 5 as a way in which we can save money by reducing the amount of politicians—save the public \$25 million. If you feel any commitment and

fealty to Rob Ford's legacy, to the Premier's legacy, where that community organizing model came from, I would encourage you to consider other efficiencies, some of which we've talked to in the four weeks we've had together in this summer sitting.

My friend talked about the decision the government made to legislate CUPE 3903 back to work, and how that was something of which he was very proud. Well, if Bill 5 is about efficiencies and finding money, I will repeat my advice—as someone who has taught in the university system—for my friends to take a much, much finer-toothed comb over the university sector, because at this very moment, the people you just legislated back to work are the people who have to grind it day in and day out on very minimal pay, often with no benefits, doing most of the on-campus teaching, while a growing group of administrators on university and college campuses continue to suck up more and more of our public resources.

You're excited about saving \$25 million? The president of the university I used to work at, Carleton University, enjoys a salary of \$474,000 a year. That's roughly twice the salary of the Premier. They have a car allowance of \$1,500 a month. They have a housing allowance, if you can believe it, of \$3,000 a month.

The enrolment rate at Carleton, since the year 2000, has only gone up 36%. The amount of upper management—and when I mean "upper management," I'm not talking about people working directly with students, helping them with their problems; I'm talking about associate vice-presidents and their respective assistants. That caste on campus at Carleton has grown by 63%, and this in a context where most of the people I used to represent at Carleton University as the chief steward of my union are losing work, are couch-surfing and are finding it difficult to get by, doing the work that's important for students.

I want to invite the members opposite to consider that as a place where you could save money. When Gordon Campbell and his team do their forensic report of the public's finances, go over every single executive contract in this province. Ask yourselves, as good Conservatives: Is it justifiable to have this floating aristocratic caste governing our public governing our public institutions, or ought it not to be more justifiable to make to make sure that those people live in a way that serves the public, not as CEOs or celebrities that live in bubbles?

I'm thinking of Amit Chakma, the former president of the University of Western Ontario. Revelations were that in 2016, Mr. Chakma had two salaries, earning him a net income that year of over \$900,000—\$900,000 working for the public, administering a public university, while the average salary at that campus was somewhere in the mid-\$40,000s.

I think we can agree that the public's money should be well spent, but instead of massively changing the city of Toronto's governing structure in the middle of an election—something I think all of us would never agree to in the context of the recent provincial election—let's look at much bigger sources for efficiencies to find savings for the Canadian people.

I'll name a few more—one that I was talking about earlier this afternoon. I was talking about the case of Bobbi Assoun, where I live in Ottawa. This is a woman living with multiple sclerosis, in a wheelchair, on the Ontario Disability Support Program, just made homeless because her daughter moved out and she had \$428 taken out of her monthly income as a consequence. Made homeless—that was one of the phone calls I got over the weekend. We've been doing our best to find emergency shelter for Bobbi. We found a place on the east end of the city. But, here we are, a newly elected MPP and our constituency assistants, trying to help one of the most marginalized people in our city find access to housing, while Mayo Schmidt, the person this government fired—I think, perhaps justifiably. This year, Speaker, Mayo Schmidt will cash out his stock options, and when he cashes out those stock options, he won't be the six-million-dollar man. Depending on whose research you believe, he could be the nine-million-dollar man, the 10-million-dollar man or the 12-million-dollar man, because stock options—when one is paid in stock options, and there is a tiny slice of our society who are paid in stock options—are 50% tax-deductible. How could that be? Why do we allow that to persist when someone like Bobbi Assoun in my riding is struggling to find housing, to find access to medication for her chronic pain? And yet, we let Mayo Schmidt walk away under a tax regime that massively advantages him.

I think the words "Paradise Papers" could send a chill down our spine. The revelations that were revealed last year: 3,000 Canadians were named in the Paradise Papers, many of which are our blue chip companies. Loblaw's is an example. Loblaw's is currently being sued by the Canada Revenue Agency for over \$400 million for creating a shell company in the Bahamas and siphoning over \$400 million out of our country that could have gone to hospitals, that should have gone to schools, that could have gone into emergency housing for someone like Bobbi. They are taking advantage of rules that exist that advantage them.

Speaker, I'm saying to my friends that we know you want to save \$25 million at the city of Toronto by cutting seats in the middle of an election. That's small potatoes. That is small potatoes. I invite you to allow the officials at the Ministry of Finance to work with their colleagues collaboratively at the Department of Finance in Ottawa to start the aggressive closing of these tax loopholes that are starving our country.

At the moment, Speaker, we can look at the usage of tax havens. In 1994, Canada lost \$2.1 billion due to tax havens in revenue that could have stayed here, could have built hospitals, could have built schools, could have provided mental health services, could have helped people like Bobbi. In 2016, we've lost \$284 billion. There are two families in this country—one of whom I've already named, the Westons, who own Loblaw's and Shoppers Drug Mart—who have as much wealth as 11 million Canadians. We have presided over the greatest growth of inequality this country has ever seen in the last 10 or 15 years.

If you want to find efficiencies, I invite you not to disrupt the city of Toronto's elections midstream for \$25 million. I invite you to consider what Rob Ford did under the 47-ward structure they had in building up an effective constituency operation that people respected, including me. I invite you to think about the bigger potatoes you've got to go after: the big people, the people who game our tax rules and starve our public services.

When my friends talk about the fact that they went around the province and spoke to people who had to choose between heating or eating, I get that. I heard it too. I'm from rural Ontario. Where I'm from—Vankleek Hill, Ontario, if you know where that is—I heard it too. But instead of suggesting that the city of Toronto's political class is the problem, at a cost of \$25 million, why don't we start looking much higher up our political and social structure? Why don't we start looking at the way in which we are losing billions in this country because no politician yet—yet—has taken a systematic approach to tax evasion? That is like saying "Voldemort," Speaker, if you'll forgive the Harry Potter talk, but that is the language we've got to start speaking if we want to stand up for the people.

The people need resources and access to services. Important among them are their political representatives. They want to be able to pick up the phone and reach me. It's the approach I use myself. I give out my cellphone number in the riding. Apparently thousands of people have it. It drives staff I work for crazy. But when they get a hold of me, we work on reasonable expectations about their problems and we try to help, like we tried to help Bobbi this last weekend, because that's my job.

But I really think that when it comes to the city of Toronto, we have to think bigger than the political cudgels that we pick up against each other about whether somebody believes in bloated government and another person believes in a leaner, more efficient government. We're talking past each other. I think on both sides of this aisle—let me make the ambitious guess—we both believe in tax fairness. I don't think anybody in this House would agree that there should be a certain tax system for the super-rich and another one for the rest of us. We both want to try to close those loopholes. Let's do that in the next four years.

1510

I think we both believe in due process and citizens having access to their politicians, so let's make sure that can happen. I invite you to consider that if you steamroll this forward, your passion notwithstanding, you're going to take some of that away, which belies the legacy of your own party in the example of Rob Ford.

I also invite you to consider that at the end of the day this isn't about us trying to get under each other's skin in this place; it's about us trying to make the decisions that will help people live healthier, better-off lives.

Thanks for the opportunity, Speaker, in this chamber this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: We were elected on June 7 on a promise, which is restoring public trust in government, trust in a government which cares for the people, their families, their interests and their tax money. By reducing the size of government, we are saving money, we are making it more efficient and the decision-making flow would be faster.

Let's ask the member: Did any consultation happen when we added this chair layer, like a fourth layer of government, in 2016? Some 90%, or 80% at least, of the residents don't know exactly about the existence of the regional chair position, and maybe 100% of them, or a very small number of them, are excluded who understand exactly what the difference is between the role of the regional chair and the standard councillor position. In a nutshell, from 2016 to today, I don't think anybody felt that difference in position.

I would also really encourage all members—even the respectable member from the other side—that we need to work for the people. This government came on a promise that it's for people, so we need to work together to make that happen for the service of the people.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Doly Begum: I want to thank the member from Ottawa Centre for his remarks. I'm glad to hear someone speak to the importance of true representation, because this bill to cut city hall in half really speaks to the danger of representation. You also brought up the ghost of Mayor Ford and how he was an organizer, and I truly believe in that as well.

Over the last few days, we've noticed in this House that members on the other side demonize politicians. We have seen members who are also politicians speak to this bill, talking about city politicians, demonizing them. I want to share that when I joined politics, looking up to a lot of the politicians from before—Speaker, I'm sure there are people you looked up to or people who look up to you right now, for example, as a politician. I think there are a lot of youth in our communities who look up to politicians, because they also want to work for the good, to represent people, to represent their community and how important that is.

When I joined politics, I wanted to represent them and I wanted to be their voice. The idea of city hall and the borders that we have for the wards—for example, in Scarborough Southwest, we have two wards and we have over 100,000 people. For the municipal issues that we deal with, from parking to housing to development to roads to potholes, for all these small but very important issues, we need good representation and good representatives who will talk to these issues, who will bring them up, who will represent the people's voices and make sure that we actually get things done.

What I think this government should do is to actually apologize for demonizing our politicians, because about 70 of them who've made this Premier the Premier are demonizing politicians, and it's really important to recognize that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member for Ottawa Centre for your comments on the bill. Thank you, also, for your comments on our former mayor, Rob Ford. I thought that was very big of you to admit that he had a certain credibility in his organization of his area and in responding to people in the area. I think people know that to be true, and I think it's big of you to say that.

Your focus and your comments were about the \$25 million that we believe we're going to save by shrinking the size of council—at least that was part of your focus. You didn't think that was really the big potatoes, I think you said. Twenty-five million dollars, however, is a significant amount of money. I think we'd all agree that it is money worth saving. So I don't think you need to fear that we're not going to go after the big potatoes; we're going to go after the big potatoes and save a lot of money for the people of Ontario. That's part of what we were elected to do, and we're certainly going to work on that.

But this bill is about dysfunctional government at city hall—at least that part of it is. Even John Sewell, writing in the North Toronto Post in June 2018, said that the Toronto government is dysfunctional and that Premier Ford should do something about it.

So here we are, taking steps to try to make this government more functional and more manageable, and the size of the government is a big part of that. We believe that 25 is a much better number to work with. It will be a bit inconvenient, shall we say, for people who were running. I understand that. We're not against politicians, generally, but what we are sort of against is people who make that kind of thing the most important part of it. We're all here to serve the people.

Reading from what one of my constituents said: "This is not the time for high dudgeon," but rather the time for "an effective and cost-effective city council that is elected on an approximately equal basis." And that's what we're trying to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now return to the member for final comments. The member—

Mr. John Vanthof: We have one more.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Forgive me—one more.

It is the member from Brampton East for final—or for questions and comments.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Second-last, Mr. Speaker. Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to rise in this Legislative Assembly, and thank you to the member from Ottawa Centre for his very compelling address to the members in this assembly.

I want to speak a little bit about this rationale, this idea that this reduction in city council size is something that we see across North America. Specifically, there's a reference often made by the Premier to Los Angeles having a council of 15 members plus one mayor. What the Premier has failed to recognize and failed to state is that Los Angeles has, actually, 97 neighbourhood councils that also are part of the democratic and governance

system of Los Angeles, which has an annual budget in the millions. So I disagree with this notion that LA is even an appropriate example to say that they have a smaller council and, thus, they are an example that we can follow.

If we were to follow their model, their model is one which actually has a lot of a community involvement, a lot of engagement, and a system in place which engages directly with the constituents of that city and of those neighbourhoods.

If we look across North America, though, we see that this example is prevalent: Chicago, a city of 2.27 million, has 50 council members plus one mayor; Vancouver, here locally, has a population around 650,000 individuals with 10 council members and one mayor; Montreal, 1.7 million with 65 elected officials; and Edmonton, 900,000 with 12 councillors and one mayor. Once again, we see across the board that the representation in their democratic systems allow for a system that has the appropriate number of elected officials to properly facilitate and communicate and connect with the residents of that city.

So I want to make mention that it is inaccurate to say that LA just has 15 members; it has more, and so do amazing cities across this entire continent.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now I return to the member from Ottawa Centre for final comment.

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank the members from Mississauga—Erin Mills, Scarborough Southwest, Eglinton—Lawrence and Brampton East for their comments.

1520

Again, I hope that was refreshing for you. It's how I do this business. I like to speak to people, not over, not at them. I don't heckle, if you haven't noticed. I really believe that what I want to do in this space is try to work with people from all sides of the aisle, particularly in the caucus, with the values that I was raised with, to get stuff done. I'm cautioning you—and I love passion. Don't get me wrong; we need more passion in this country. But in the passion that you have to change the city of Toronto's election during the election, I think you're making a mistake. I think you're making a mistake that will come back to haunt you inside your own party, if I can appeal to your self-interest for a moment. I understand that a lot of people, including some of my friends on the left, are frustrated with the process at Toronto city hall. I can say the same thing about the process of city hall in my own city. But I can guarantee you that the city of Ottawa will not work better with six councillors. It won't. It will mean that people in my city will have less access to their councillor.

I was talking to Riley Brockington. My friend the member from Ottawa West—Nepean and I were talking about Riley Brockington not long ago. His anger when I met with him was that in the city of Ottawa, his riding, because of the glitterati that exist in my riding—because I'm near the federal government—gets ignored. Their projects get ignored—and how important it is for him to be accessible, for his phone number to be accessible.

When I hear a story like that from a great councillor like Riley Brockington, I think, "What is going to happen to the city of my birth, the city of Toronto?" I know that efficiency may be apparent on the surface, but in the substance of what we give voters access to, what's the outcome of this experiment? I invite you in your caucus to have that conversation. I hope it's happening.

Thank you, Speaker, for the time to speak.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to be able to speak in the Legislature today. As you know, we don't get many opportunities in this corner of the House to speak on issues. It is a real privilege to stand in the Legislature to talk about an issue that's important to me as an MPP but also as a Torontonian.

I remember that, the night before the announcement was made, I saw the report on Twitter saying that the new Conservative government was going to consider cutting council in half. I remember speaking to a friend on the phone and I said, "Do you know what? There's absolutely no way that the Premier of this province is going to cut it in half during an election. There's absolutely no way." Actually, I would have bet \$1,000 if the opportunity came up at that time that he would never have done that. I was shocked the next day when the announcement was made and he said he was actually going to do it for this election.

I've never disputed the number—if it's 25, if it's double that, if it's 35. I think that's a healthy conversation in a democracy to have, a conversation about the representation number for a specific body. We just went through that process here in the Ontario Legislature. I just have to remind members that a lot of the members who are sitting here today are here because of the expansion of seats in this very House. On one side, we hear the Premier and the government talking about how less government is more efficient. But we just went through an election where we actually expanded the number of seats in this Legislature.

I didn't believe that it was actually going to take place. I was actually shocked when I did find out that it was going to take place during an election. It sent our city into chaos. There are a lot of people out there who have gone and raised money, who have connected with community groups, who have knocked on doors in a specific area, and now they have to rethink their strategy. There are sitting councillors who work together in their communities who are now battling in their local communities. I think it's irresponsible for any government to change the rules during an actual election.

I agree with the member from Ottawa Centre. I agree with many members in the House who disagree with the process that is being put in place. But make no mistake, Mr. Speaker: This is not about the size of government that I'm concerned about; it's about the way in which it was done. I don't think it was very fair to the city of Toronto.

I think roughly half of the seats in this city are represented by Conservative members. I would have hoped

that the Conservative members in this Legislature who represent ridings in the city of Toronto would have at least had the decency to stand up for their communities and allow them to have a voice when these types of decisions are being made. This is not a decision about how much we're going to spend a specific program; this is not a decision around which road is going to be built; this is a decision about how democracy is done in the largest city in this country.

We always hear on the other side that the city of Toronto itself is dysfunctional. I'd like to remind members in this Legislature that half of the GDP of this province comes from this city. The strongest financial sector outside of New York in this entire region, North America, is in this city. We have a growing interactive digital media and film and television sector, and there were more buildings being built here in 2012 and 2013 than all of North America combined. How does a city council that's dysfunctional actually accomplish that?

To say that the city council is dysfunctional and that's the premise of this change is so irresponsible. For the members who represent ridings in this city, I think it's irresponsible and I think it's turning their backs to the residents of the city—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Coteau: So the member opposite from Renfrew here who is speaking—I want talk a little bit about his town, for example. Why was it that Toronto was singled out? They said that there are too many city councillors. Roughly, in my part of the city, the Don Mills community, in wards 33 and 32, they have around 50,000 people each. That's one councillor for 50,000. Now it's going to be about one councillor for about 110,000 people.

Let's look at the member from Renfrew in his riding, the Minister of Transportation, who has claimed that this Premier is going to be the greatest transportation minister in the history of this country. In the minister's city in the riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, there's a population of 103,000. They have one mayor, one deputy councillor, five city councillors; one city councillor for every 2,700 people in his hometown—one councillor for every 2,700 people.

Let's take the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who represents Leeds–Grenville. He also represents the city of Brockville. They have 30,000 people; in fact, it's 29,000. They have one mayor and they have eight city councillors, so they have one city councillor for every 3,700 people.

Think about that for a second. On one side, they're saying, "Oh, in the city of Toronto, there's too many of them. One per 110,000: It's a lot of people, but they can handle that. One councillor can handle 110,000 people." But in their very towns, in Renfrew and Brockville, it's one per under 4,000. Where is the fairness here?

Hon. John Yakabuski: They don't make the kind of money they make in Toronto. What are the wages? What are the wages for those poor councillors in Renfrew?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Minister of Transportation will come to order.

Mr. Michael Coteau: He says it's about the wages. The member representing Renfrew says it's about the wages. Mr. Speaker, it's about democracy. It's about people having a place to go when they need to get out there and they need to actually access the system.

Let's talk about a few other towns. So Todd Smith, who I actually like—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Oh, sorry; let me resay that, Mr. Speaker—the member who represents Belleville, population of 50,000: one mayor, eight councillors; 6,300 people per councillor.

The Minister of Finance: He's got 75,000 people in his town. He's got one mayor and he's got 10 city councillors—one councillor for every 7,500 people. That's really efficient. Do you know what? There should be one councillor for the entire city, according to the Toronto formula.

Mr. Speaker, we know what this is all about. I had some other names. I'm going to spare you guys. This is about fairness. If they were really serious about making change in this province, open up the process and actually—

Hon. John Yakabuski: We have made change.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Well, a buck a beer is a lot of change.

But if they were really serious about a conversation about democracy, I would ask them to open up this conversation and make it a provincial conversation. Let's talk about the formula that can be used across different municipalities to make governments more efficient. We're not afraid to have that conversation. But just to walk into a city council in between an election and actually say, "I'm sorry; we're going to change everything a couple of months before the election," is just irresponsible, and they know it. They know it.

1530

This is an attack on the city of Toronto. I'm not going to get into the reasons and I'm not going to try to guess why it's happening, but I think many of us in the House, including on that side, could probably guess why this is taking place. This is about silencing the voice of citizens.

Here is an interesting fact: During the election, they said they were going to get rid of the health and wellness curriculum, otherwise known as the sex ed curriculum. They said that they were going to get rid of it. Now they're saying they're going to do a system-wide consultation because it wasn't fair because, "No one consulted with the people of Ontario, and now we're going to go and talk to the people of Ontario. We're going to have a conversation and we're going to come back with a plan that represents the way people feel."

But when it comes to local democracy, there's a different approach: "Hey, we don't need to have the conversation because the people have spoken. They gave us a mandate." This is what the government is saying: "They gave us a mandate to make things efficient."

Could you imagine how scary it is in a democracy when any decision that you're making can be backed up with one single premise: "We're going to find efficiencies; we're going to make it efficient"?

I got involved in running at the Toronto District School Board back in 2003. I've been elected as a school board trustee for eight years and as an MPP for seven years. When I got to the Toronto District School Board, the salary for a trustee was \$5,000. That's how much Mike Harris reduced it to. I think it was \$40,000, and he reduced it to \$5,000. It was an attack, at the time, on the local voice. It was there to silence the voice of trustees at the Toronto District School Board by pushing those positions down so the voices weren't as loud.

What he didn't realize—Mike Harris at the time, the former Premier—is that a guy like myself, who was in his late twenties, who was on the sidelines, watching what was happening—what he didn't realize is that a new generation of leadership and people who wanted to get involved in politics started to emerge. They started to come forward because democracy was being silenced in the city.

I agree with the member from Ottawa Centre. What they don't realize on the other side is that by silencing the voice of the majority, they're actually investing in the next generation of young men and women in this province who will be challenging the Conservative Party of Ontario the next time around.

There are different ways to do things. There are ways to engage the public. I just believe that what the Conservative Party has done here is not the right way; it's not the fair way. They need to, I think, revisit the approach that they've taken. I would ask the members opposite to really reconsider everything that they're doing in regard to this piece of legislation and actually go out and just talk to people in the city of Toronto.

I think about the way this city is represented now in this House. If you look at their cabinet, besides the Premier there's only one person from this city who is in that cabinet. It's underrepresented in their cabinet. It is underrepresented at the ministry level. They don't have ministers from this city to take on the challenges, besides Minister Cho.

I really believe, Mr. Speaker, that it's up to Torontonians now to rise up and to challenge this government; to say, "You can't silence our voice; you cannot not allow us to participate in democracy, and creating this new model of city council without any type of input is a real insult not only to the city of Toronto but to the people of Ontario."

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Coteau: The member from Renfrew: I've listened to him many, many times in this House. In fact, I think he's probably one of the best speakers in this Legislature. When he speaks, I actually listen to him. He often talks about local democracy. He talks about making sure that the voice of rural Ontario is always represented at the table. I would have thought that the member opposite would extend that same courtesy to a city like Toronto.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, do you really believe that the process that you've engaged in is the right thing to do for this city? To go into the middle of an election and just say, "Stop, we're going to eliminate half the spots and we're going to just change everything, change timelines, and you're going to have to go back and rethink your entire financial"—everything changes. It is unheard of. It has never been done in this city before; it has never been done in this province. I don't know if it has been done in this country.

Interjection: It's very innovative.

Mr. Michael Coteau: One of the members here says that it's very innovative, like their buck-a-beer program. Very innovative programming coming from—I said to these guys yesterday that are just around me here—if they're going to talk, I'm going to respond directly. I said, "Instead of a buck a beer, what about a buck for a book to increase literacy levels for children in this city and in this province?" I think that we need to think of ways—

Hon. John Yakabuski: If the printers volunteer we will allow them to sell a book for a buck.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The Minister of Transportation will come to order. By the way, that's the second time.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I also did suggest that instead of a buck a beer, what about a buck for a TTC ride? That would be nice for the Minister of Transportation to invest in; get people moving in this city for a buck. Get people reading those books on the buses and the trains that you're here to represent. But no, no, no, no; they're focusing on something very different. They're going to bring us back to the 1980s.

I would love to actually debate in the next round of debates when we get the—I hope the buck-a-beer debate comes into this Legislature and I'm given the time. I'm a fan of grunge music. I like grunge music. I like 1990s hip hop too. I'm hoping they can bring that back too in their little time machine. They're going way back in time and they're bringing things back: a buck a beer, \$2.50 Tuesdays at the movie theatre. Do you remember that? Please bring that back and just subsidize Cineplex Odeon.

There's so much this government could be doing to focus on really building this province and making a difference in this province by building democracy and representation. I would just hope, at the end of the day, as this government goes forward, that this government starts to really—I want this government to do well. I want this government to actually be successful because if the government is successful the people of Ontario are successful. I want them to be successful. I want local councils to be successful. I want governments to be successful.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Someone just said, "Oh, you were there for 15 years." I was in government for six years as a minister.

I hope that this government, this new government, which won the majority of the vote, 40%, which has a clear mandate to represent the people of Ontario—they

have a clear mandate; no one is disputing that—I hope that as they move forward the members in the backbenches and the experienced ministers in the front who have been here for, I don't know, two or three decades, really take the time to encourage the Premier to do things that are actually going to help democracy in this province, that are going to help people get involved and want to participate in democracy and building government.

The people of Toronto would have loved to have engaged this government in a meaningful conversation about how to make democracy and government more efficient, how to make the city of Toronto work better. Instead, they've silenced the majority; they've silenced the people of Ontario and they've told them that their point of view doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter in this House. What matters to them is to push an agenda that tells city council who's the boss.

It's very clear at this point. It has always been clear that the Premier and the government do have control over municipalities in many ways, but it's the most obviously clear moment in our history in Ontario where we know that this House and, in fact, this government has a lot of control and say in democracy.

1540

Again, my advice to the members in the back, the members in the front and especially the members from Toronto: Maybe you just have to toe the line in this House, in the backbenches, and just follow what the government says, but in caucus, in cabinet, without an audience, please stand up and speak on these issues. Speak to the issues that matter. Talk about democracy and the need for people to be involved in the process. And don't use legislation to punish; use legislation to build and to make the world a better place around us. I would encourage members to do just that.

Members of the government: Even if you're not from the city of Toronto, if it can happen in the city of Toronto, it can happen in your own city. Could you imagine, Mr. Speaker—I was going to say "Chatham-Kent," but I'm going to leave you alone; you're in the chair. But could you imagine, overnight, getting a memo from the Premier's office in the middle of an election in Renfrew, in Belleville, in our beautiful towns in this province—imagine, as a councillor or the mayor, getting a memo saying, "I know you're in the middle of an election, but by the way, we've decided in this House, without any consultation, that we're going to cut your council in half"? Could you imagine that?

It's easy to get away with it in Toronto, because it's a big city. It maybe sells well in other places—it's just an immediate reaction—but when we really think about what's going on here as citizens, when we really think about what's taking place, this is a very scary moment in Ontario's history. And the only people who can stop this now are the members opposite. It's not us on this side; we don't have the votes. It's the members in cabinet, it's the members on the other side who can stand up for the city of Toronto, stand up for democracy and make this place, this beautiful province, a better place for all of us.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member from Don Valley East for his presentation today. We don't get to enjoy that as often as we used to anymore, because of the configuration of the House, but that's the way democracy works. You see, what happens is that the people all across Ontario voted, and this is the House that they voted for.

But I do want to touch on that, on Bill 5, which the member spoke pretty clearly against today. He's going to have one vote on that bill, the same number of votes that I'm going to get, or anybody else in this House—and that's democracy at work as well. A bill was brought before this Legislature, and it will be voted on, as any other piece of legislation.

I do want to reference the fact that he talked about Renfrew, Belleville, North Bay and other places—and Brockville. See, democracy is at work there as well. I've had the pleasure and the benefit of spending a lot of time in Renfrew, Pembroke, Arnprior, Deep River, Barry's Bay, Eganville and all the different places, and I've seen how those governments work.

I've also had the benefit of spending time here in Toronto, and I congratulate our Premier on recognizing the fact that the people of Toronto have been saying for years that their council has become dysfunctional, it's parochial and it's not getting the job done. So he has taken the measure and brought forth the legislation on what the people have been asking for in Toronto for years: a functional, more working, more efficient, more effective council. Bill 5 will give the people in Toronto exactly what they've been asking for for years.

So I say to the member for Don Valley East: Be with the people, just like Premier Ford. Do it for the people. Vote for Bill 5. It's better for Toronto. It's better for Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I want to thank the member from Don Valley East for contributing his experience to this debate on Bill 5. I think the premise of his comments really does call into question the motivation for Bill 5. When the government says to us that you will save \$25.5 million by reducing the duly elected representatives for the people of this great city, and that that is a value-for-money concept or a return on investment, we have enough research to show that that actually is a false claim. We have the research from multiple municipalities across Canada that the savings that this move will make will actually not be realized. The only thing that will be compromised is the quality of the debate, the quality of the representation that the people of this great province have at their disposal to actually ensure that they have the public services that we all pretend to value.

In fact, rejecting the premise of cost savings—this is actually quoting from the Fraser Institute, which I have to tell you I never thought I would do: "But councillors represent a minor fraction of city spending. According to

Premier Ford, the city will save \$25.5 million over four years—or approximately one-twentieth of one per cent of Toronto's \$11.12-billion annual operating budget." In fact, it will be a savings of \$2.33 per citizen. Is that the cost of compromising the democracy of this great city? I think not.

I will remind the members opposite, as the member from Don Valley did, that the people of Toronto have not asked for less representation; they have asked for better representation. Bill 5 denies them that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Lindsey Park: I just want to start off by thanking the member from Don Valley East for adding his commentary and perspective to this debate. I want to touch on one aspect of what you raised, which was this idea that the members for the city of Toronto, the government members, have not consulted their community.

We just went through a provincial election where I know from speaking to my fellow colleagues from the city of Toronto that they were working their tails off to go door to door, to hear from as many people in the community as they possibly could, and they were listening. They weren't only speaking to share their own agenda, but they were listening to what people had to say about what changes they wanted to see a government make. Over and over again, they heard that they wanted a PC government that would get into this Legislature and reduce the size of government. They said over and over again that Toronto city council is dysfunctional. This is not made up. This is directly from what we heard at the doors.

I want to actually just share quotes from a couple of constituents of my friend the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. One—this was received in the form of an email. It was actually an email sent to Mayor John Tory:

"I am disappointed with your reaction to Premier Ford's announcement that city council will be reduced from the proposed 47 wards to 25.

"Premier Ford's initiative comes at an inopportune time for the city, perhaps, given the upcoming municipal elections. But inconvenience should not trump the urgency to deal with what is now a dysfunctional city council."

That's one constituent from Eglinton–Lawrence. We have another constituent from Eglinton–Lawrence who seems to agree—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Sorry; you're out of time.

Further questions and comments?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I want to speak about what we've seen over the past few weeks from this government. We have seen the slashing of city council overnight from 47 to 25 members. We have seen a buck a beer being made a priority. On the other hand, we see \$100 million being cut from schools and \$330 million being cut from mental health.

What I'm going to put forward to you, Mr. Speaker, is that this government has their priorities out of whack.

Let's talk about Brampton. The Premier has stated very clearly that he loves Brampton: Brampton is the best city; he's all for Brampton. Well, if he loves Brampton, instead of slashing city council, instead of doing a buck a beer, he would have talked about the issues that people really care about: slashing auto insurance, the highest auto insurance in this country, and stopping hallway medicine—the busiest ER in this country is in Brampton, at Brampton Civic. We have not a word about these issues. Instead we see a buck a beer and slashing city council.

What I put forward to you, Mr. Speaker, is that if this were truly a government for the people, courageous action would have been immediately slashing auto insurance and immediately ending hallway medicine. These are the priorities that people need, not putting forward these actions around city council, not putting forward these actions for a buck a beer.

1550

What I'm saying is that we see continually that life is getting harder. People are seeing this pinch on their wallet. They're seeing the pinch on everyday expenses. We need action on that. That's truly courageous work. That's work for the people. That's work that people are going to really resonate with. It's not just in Brampton; it's across this entire province. We need to make life better for people, and not to put forward positions that are really just going to address superficial things like making beer more affordable, or issues around city council which are making life more undemocratic.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now return to the member from Don Valley East for final comment.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I want to thank all the members in the Legislature for their comments. At the end of the day, we're here to work together, to look for ways to build a better Ontario.

We've heard comments from different members. There was one member who talked about how they're just fresh off the campaign trail, they've talked to people across the city of Toronto and they've been given a mandate to go out there and make things more efficient. But I just want to remind the member opposite that never once did the government actually say that this was part of its proposal. To say that you're given a mandate to make things more efficient gives you the licence and authority to do almost anything you want.

For example, Ontario Place, we know at this point, has been put on hold. They could cancel that project tomorrow and call it efficiency. They could cut programs to help children and call it an efficiency. They can take subsidies that help school repairs and call it an efficiency. It's just a terrible premise to use to actually push forward a mandate and then actually claim that it comes from the people. It's a falsehood; it's not true. You had somewhat of a platform that you established, and you came out with several pieces that you said you were going to do—like a buck a beer—and you're going to do it. Okay, you've got the mandate of the people. Do it.

But never, throughout this election, did people knock on doors and say: "We're going to cut city council in half in the city of Toronto." Never. Not once did it come up. Please, stop telling the people of Ontario that you have the mandate to do this, because no one gave you the mandate to do that. No one gave you the mandate to go into a city council during the middle of an election and cut the council size in half. No one gave you that mandate, and it's this arrogance in this government to actually assume they have that power—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Roman Baber: This is my first time rising in debate, except for my inaugural speech, and I couldn't think of a better piece of legislation to speak to. It's really a distinct pleasure to speak on Bill 5, the Better Local Government Act, or, as I call it, the "better city of Toronto for everyone act." I speak to the House today as a resident, a taxpayer, a voter and a cheerleader of the city of Toronto.

We campaigned on a clear message, crystal clear. We campaigned on a better, more efficient government, and if there is a place anywhere on this earth that requires a better, more efficient government, it is our magnificent city of Toronto.

Let's look for a minute at what Bill 5 is going to accomplish vis-à-vis our priorities. We campaigned on good government that works for the people, not for the insiders. City council must be accountable to the voters, but we have city councillors that have been serving for over 25, 30 years, incumbents that no longer feel the public pressure to decide what's truly best for Toronto. They're lifers. Well, Bill 5 is going to change that—so, restoring government accountability: check. We campaigned on saving taxpayer money—\$25 million, by the government's estimates—so, saving the taxpayer money: check.

We campaigned on building transit. When was the last time Toronto agreed and proceeded on a transit project? I don't think that any of our researchers would know that, because it was probably before the days of the Internet. When was the last time council made a transit decision that did not go back on itself or let us put a shovel in the ground? I can't really recall. This bill is going to streamline government, allowing us to build transit, something we committed to in the election campaign. Transit, saving money, accountability: check, check, check.

This is why I couldn't be more proud of Premier Ford and Minister Clark, and why, as an MPP from Toronto, I couldn't be more proud to go back to my constituents and to my friends and say, "You see? We did what we said we were going to do," which fits into the record of this government. Promises made; promises kept.

But I'm concerned about what I'm hearing from the opposition. Never mind the language or the rhetoric; when the opposition questions the government's mandate to effect change in Toronto, it is the opposition that is undermining democracy. It's the opposition that undermines the rule of law.

First of all, the government received a colossal mandate in Toronto—11 government MPPs from the city of Toronto. Count them. Torontonians trusted our government to bring change to Ontario, to bring change to Toronto, and we will not let them down—no. We did not campaign on hollow promises. We campaigned on a streamlined, more efficient government, and we will discharge our responsibility to the people of Toronto and deliver a streamlined, more efficient local government.

Second, somehow the opposition would have this House believe that all of this is happening in some sort of legal vacuum. That proposition is not grounded in law. With respect to my friends, they are outright wrong.

Canada, Mr. Speaker, is a confederation—federalism at different levels of government at its core. The makeup of our country is clear: The provinces are vested with the power to create, alter and regulate municipalities. The city of Toronto, the body corporate, is a creation of the province. Be it the City of Toronto Act or the Municipal Act, the city derives its administrative, taxation and regulatory powers from the province, and for good reason. Even Mayor Tory, when questioned by the media about 10 days ago, conceded that the province is probably on solid footing.

The province is well within its right, Mr. Speaker, and it shall act and exercise such a right in accordance with its mandate—and not a moment too soon—to bring relief to the people of Toronto.

From Lake Shore to Steeles Avenue, from Highway 427 to Markham Road, Torontonians expect city government to work for them. Like I've said before, Mr. Speaker—just a slightly amended version—Torontonians don't work for city government; city government works for Torontonians. I say this as a Toronto resident. We're entitled to a better city? No, we demand better government from the city.

Let's talk about savings first. Our government estimates that the move to trim city council will save us approximately \$25 million. My friend said: "\$25 million? That's peanuts." Well, no. The largest expenditure in our city is the police services board. It accounts for almost half of the budget. But council decided that if there is a place to cut, they're going to cut front-line officers. So do you know what they did? They cut our force from 5,000 police officers to 4,200 officers over the last couple of years. In an effort to save money, they cut 20% of our force. I think they called it "forced modernization."

Mr. Speaker, we're experiencing perhaps the most violent year in Toronto's history. It's very, very sad. You may remember the summer of the gun. Well, we're on track to surpass it—heaven forbid.

I live adjacent to the magnificent neighbourhoods of Bathurst Manor and Clanton Park. Bathurst Manor is located just north of Sheppard and east of Bathurst. Clanton Park is the square between where Wilson, Sheppard, Bathurst and Wilson Heights, some of the safest neighbourhoods in the city of Toronto. Well, not anymore. Both areas are experiencing a tremendous uptick in violence, break-and-enters and car break-ins.

But even more upsetting—and I hear this all the time—a Clanton Park resident would call 32 division to report a car break-in, a frightening experience, but the police are unable to respond. Sometimes officers don't even arrive till the next day, or the residents are told to go to a police station and file a report. That is unbelievable. That is un-Canadian. Toronto Police cannot respond to break-ins because they don't have enough officers, but what is the city doing? It's cutting. It's merging police divisions, cutting them in half.

1600

Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker? We don't need more politicians. We don't need to cut our police stations by half; we need to cut our politicians by half. John Tory cut 800, maybe closer to 1,000 police officers from the streets of Toronto. Twenty-five million dollars pays the salaries of approximately 250 police officers. That is money well spent. Meanwhile, Chief Saunders and the mayor, what are they saying? "We need to increase police presence in key areas." Bravo—finally. But how are we going to do that? They can't.

But look at our government. Look at what we did last week. Last week, our PC government committed to \$25 million to fight guns and gangs, the cause of this mayhem. Wouldn't it be nice if the city took the \$25 million it's going to save and match our commitment to help restore the police force that was here before it was cut, to respond to calls, to prevent gun violence? Bill 5 will free up those resources: more police, less politicians. Imagine that. It's the NDP's worst nightmare.

I'm so proud of what our government is doing with the Better Local Government Act. One of my favourite things about Bill 5 is that it will finally give Torontonians equal representation. Here, we're going to talk about democracy now. It will give all Torontonians an equal vote—an ability to have a say in what is good for them, an ability to choose their destiny, instead of being subjected to the whim of a few.

The current makeup of city wards is anything but fair. For instance, ward 18 in Parkdale has 72,000 residents, but ward 21 in Toronto Centre has 28,000 residents. How is that fair? How is that democracy? I ask my friends in the opposition party: How is that democratic? Another example: Ward 19 has 72,000 residents; ward 20 has half of that—36,000 residents.

My friend from Don Valley East just spoke to the House a couple of minutes ago about democracy. Well, I believe he lives in ward 32. I checked: Ward 32 has 68,000 people. How is that fair to his constituents? Why is the member from Don Valley East not looking to safeguard the democratic rights of his constituents to make their vote equal to that of ward 21, for instance, that has 28,000 people? It doesn't make sense to me.

What the bill does is realign the ward boundaries in accordance with the federal and provincial scheme—a scheme designed with equal representation in mind, an equal number. Whether they're downtown, North York, Etobicoke or Scarborough, in ward X or ward Y, their voices are going to be equal.

Every day, I hear the opposition bring up democracy, but it is the opposition, in fact, that opposes democracy. They know it. We're blessed to live in a democracy. In a democracy, a vote is a vote is a vote. In a democracy, all votes are equal and all voters are equal. But for Bill 5, the Toronto municipal election of 2018 would not yield democracy. For you see, Mr. Speaker, my vote is not equal to the vote of my friend from Toronto Centre. It is not majority rules; it is minority rules. If you live in ward 41 in Scarborough Centre, you have 70,000 residents; if you live in ward 22 in Spadina-Fort York, you have 42,000 residents with the same vote. That's not right.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Where's the equality?

Mr. Roman Baber: That's not right, Minister of Transportation. This is quite unbelievable. Why do we deny an equal vote to wards 18, 19 and 41? Why do we weigh more than others?

I live in ward 8, at the beautiful corner of Allen Road and Sheppard, where wards 8, 9 and 10 meet in the heart of York Centre. It is the cornerstone of Canada Lands, which is home to beautiful Downsview Park, which this government will hopefully make even better.

My ward has 54,000 residents. Immediately to my east, also in York Centre, is ward 10. They have 69,000 residents. How do I explain this to my constituents, that I represent a community with 70,000 people and the member from Toronto Centre has less than 30,000 people? Why do we deny York Centre equal municipal representation? It is inconceivable. It is gross. But what is worse is that all of this, Mr. Speaker, has real-life repercussions. This is not an academic discussion about democracy. This is real stuff.

It's well known that certain areas of the city of Toronto are under-represented and certain areas of Toronto are over-represented. I want to give you an example, Mr. Speaker. I want to tell you an example of what the over-represented councillors in midtown and downtown Toronto have done with the King Street pilot project. King Street used to be a vibrant street: home to the financial district, the entertainment district, the theatre district, and home to restaurant row where people come from all over to eat and to do business. It's bustling and it's busy. But city council said, "No, no. The streetcar is too slow. We want to move downtown communities. We don't want them to drive on King Street." And, God forbid people from Scarborough are properly represented; they said that the streetcar is too slow because of traffic, and they said, "No more cars on King Street."

So the city votes to ban cars from King Street. You're only allowed to drive one block from anywhere, from Jarvis to Bathurst, and then you have to get off King. The rules are so confusing; the signage is confusing. Even city officials don't get them. It doesn't matter that the streetcar is only busy two hours a day. No, it doesn't matter. Go outside of rush hour and it's essentially empty. They turned King Street into a ghost town seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Then they did a study and they learned they only reduced the commute time by four minutes between

Bathurst and Jarvis. Meanwhile, the rest of Toronto—Scarborough, Etobicoke, north Toronto, people who enjoy coming to King Street—cannot come there anymore, and for no good reason. They took King Street away from us. They said, “Use an alternate route.” No. You can’t drive on Adelaide—it’s been under construction for 10 years—and you can’t park anywhere nearby.

But wait, there’s more. Suddenly, the city recognizes that business on King Street is down, the restaurants are empty, so what do they do? To compensate for the streetcar program that is killing business on King Street, they create another city program to stimulate business on King Street. Get this: They prevent taxpayers from spending money on King Street, and then they take more money from taxpayers to get them to come back and spend money on King Street. No wonder the Premier calls it a comedy show. And why? Because the few on council imposed their will on the collective. Toronto suburbs are under-represented. This bill, Bill 5, will put an end to that.

Mr. Speaker, I often talk about the most pressing issue for Torontonians, and the issue is transit. Transit is the key to most of the issues our generation faces, whether it’s housing, economic development or the workplace. We have not built any serious transit in the city for probably 20 years, outside of the York-University-Spadina line, of which only a kilometre is roughly in the city of Toronto. We know what has been happening, because council has been going back and forth on building subways in the city, and there’s no greater issue for most residents of the city of Toronto than getting the subway built.

In 2011, the city voted for the Scarborough subway. Since then, every year or so, council calls on a new vote on the same project. Ten times now they’ve voted to try and kill the Scarborough subway, and seven years later, not a shovel in the ground. The people of Scarborough, the city of Toronto—we all want subways, and yet council continues to stand in our way and order report after report and get vote after vote. Well, no more. Our plan will ensure that the gridlock on council is over and that the subway will be built.

1610

As I said last time, my favourite three words in the English language are subway, subway, subway. Let’s get it going. Let’s get it done—subway, subway, subway. We have no choice. We have gridlock all over the place. You can’t drive downtown, you can’t drive east-west, and the alternatives are not there. I’m certain, Mr. Speaker, that if this act passes—and it will pass—that we will be able to finally get things done in this city, something that has been virtually impossible over the last decade or so.

Look at the Gardiner: A decade now they’ve been talking about the Gardiner. First they were going to tear it down. Then they were going to have a hybrid option. Then they were going to build something else altogether. A decade ago, the cost for the Gardiner was \$300 million. Five years ago, it was \$700 million. Today, city

staff is reporting that the cost for the hybrid option for the Gardiner is \$1.3 billion. This is shameful. If we’d got going a decade ago, then the Gardiner would already have been built. Instead, it’s crumbling, just like so much of our city’s infrastructure. We cannot afford any more time to wait. We’ve got to get going on this now and get this right. We have to get—

Applause.

Mr. Roman Baber: That’s it. Finally, I’ll say to my friends on the opposition side: Democracy is non-negotiable. All of you, without question, are aware of the lack of equal representation on Toronto city council. I’m asking you to take a principled approach for democracy and stand up with the government and vote in favour of this bill so that you yourselves, those of you who are from the city of Toronto, do not deny your own local residents, do not deny your own constituents equal representation and democracy. They deserve it.

This is how our country is governed. We’re well within our rights, and your constituents are well within their rights to demand democracy and action. This is why I’m going to be voting in favour of Bill 5.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: The member from York Centre has said that we’re going to change how the representation of the city of Toronto looks because “We don’t like how they vote and the decisions they make. Therefore, we’re going to change the representation of the residents of Toronto.” What is at stake here are the rights of the people of Toronto to have representation: representation that serves them, representation based on the population of the city of Toronto.

We have now 47 city councillors. Reducing them into 25 means there will be less service for the people of Toronto. The current government says, “We are the government of the people.” But in the case of this bill, and in the case of Toronto, they are anti-democratic. They are not empowering the people of Toronto to make their decisions for the representation that they need.

We understand, member from York Centre, that yes, it comes under provincial jurisdiction with regard to levels of government. But that does not mean you become a dictator and impose your own agenda and your own solutions against the will of the people of Toronto.

I come from the riding of York South–Weston. The population there is 116,960—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Oh, thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): You’re welcome.

Further questions and comments: the member from Ottawa South?

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—yes, Ottawa South. Thank you. It’s a pleasure to respond to the member from York Centre.

As my colleague from Don Valley East said, you don’t have a mandate to do this. To get a mandate from the

people, you have to be clear and explicit about what your actions are, and it's very evident that you weren't clear and explicit during the campaign about this. You're intervening in the middle of an election, which I'm sure you know is not the right thing to do. You're also getting yourselves involved in the federal election, too—I can tell by the language. So there's a bit of a pattern here.

I don't know why—if you're going to go out and consult in 124 ridings on a curriculum that's been designed to protect their kids, that's been taught for three years and that's needed in September—consultation in this instance is not needed. It doesn't make any sense. It doesn't hold water. I think, on the other side, they know that.

The other piece is the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Agriculture both spoke to the elected regional chair of a number of regions very supportively on a number of occasions. Now they're saying exactly the same thing, essentially saying it would be great for democracy—those are their words. It's in Hansard. We can all go and read that.

I do want to caution the member—I know he's brand new, and there are a lot of brand new members here. He used the term “lifer.” Here's what a lifer is: the Minister of Agriculture has been here for 23 years—that's a long time; the Minister of Economic Development, 28. Now, the Minister of Transportation is a mere 15 years—I wouldn't describe that as a lifer. So I wouldn't use that as a basis of argument for taking the action that you're taking, because there are people who continue to contribute throughout their lives and are good members, as those members are.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: Thank you to my fellow member, from York Centre, and to the members from York South–Weston and Ottawa South.

When I speak to people, their biggest complaint about government—there are many, but two stand out: One is that there are too many politicians, and the second is, because of that, nothing often gets done.

I'm going to quote Christie Blatchford from the *National Post* from her article on July 27, 2018: “In the mid-to-late 1990s, council meetings occasionally went on for days, though at that time it was usually just over two. This week, the council meeting lasted five days, from Monday (when the start was adjourned out of respect for the victims of the Danforth shooting) through Thursday (when some councillors had lunch on the Danforth to show the city was carrying on) to Friday....” That is with 44 members on council, not the 47 that they currently want. What this says to me is that an oversized council makes it almost impossible to build meaningful consensus and get things done. As a result, infrastructure crumbles, housing backlogs grow and transit isn't built.

We believe in better local government, and to that point, we're going to reduce the size and cost of Toronto city hall so that decisions can be made quicker while services can be delivered more efficiently and effective-

ly. Nobody in Ontario believes that we don't have enough politicians; in fact, it's quite the opposite. So we have committed to restoring accountability and trust in government. We have also promised to reduce the size and cost of government. We're committed to ending this culture of waste and mismanagement in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I want to speak a bit about the Premier's discussion around having a mandate and this mandate that they have—or what the Conservative government has put forward in regard to a mandate they have to reduce city council.

What we do know is that they did not campaign on this matter. There was nothing in their campaign platform to reduce city council from 47 to 25, and that the king of consultation, the Premier—the self-avowed, self-professed king of consultation—did not consult on this matter before cutting city council down. And when we look at the manner in which this was rolled out, we didn't see this was something that, upon being elected, the Premier said, “This is a priority that we're going to move forward.” We didn't see, in the following weeks, that this was something that was mentioned or something that was signalled would be happening. Instead, on the eve of the deadline—we see this as a “gotcha” moment. This was something that took this province—not just this province but this country—by surprise. And this is something that immediately was criticized as such.

1620

My friend has described the legal nature upon which this decision exists. I'll talk about another legal principle: The legal principle of the “reasonable person,” that we should look at what a reasonable person would do in these kinds of circumstances. What I put forward to you, Mr. Speaker, is that a reasonable person would not make these decisions on the eve of a deadline in which people have already been campaigning and going door-to-door in terms of the wards that they were trying to represent. A reasonable person would not do it in this kind of manner.

I put forward to you, Mr. Speaker, that, instead, this would have been done in a manner that would have consulted with the residents of Toronto; this would have been done in a manner which had been clearly communicated; this would have been done in a manner which had truly been open and democratic and would have had all voices at the table in this discussion.

So I put forward that this is not the right decision to go forward and definitely something that we should all vote against.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now return to the member from York Centre for final comments.

Mr. Roman Baber: Back to my friend from Brampton: The comparison to the “reasonable person” test is irrelevant. We would consider whether a reasonable person would be relevant if we were discussing, potentially, a judgment call. What I'm saying is that this government

is fully within its right to legally do what it seeks to do, which is to amend a body corporate that is heavily prescribed by a provincial statute. The test of whether it is reasonably justifiable is not the applicable test. What is important is whether we are within our right, and we are clearly within our right.

The second issue goes back to something that was said earlier today. Mrs. Thatcher said something to the effect of, "Our opponents always criticize style, never the substance." I have yet to hear a single member of the opposition criticize the merits of the decision. I have not heard a single member say—in fact I often hear the opposite—"Perhaps there may be something to this," or "Perhaps we should revisit the size of council," or, "I would agree with you that many Toronto residents perhaps would like to cut the size of council." The opposition only criticizes the style. That is a very, very important point that, on merit, all things being equal, this is something that should probably have been done a long time ago. So I'm proud that we're going to take decisive action and actually get it done.

Finally, my friend from York South–Weston, who also represents part of ward 8, which, again, has 54,000 people, called our act dictatorial. Why doesn't my friend from York South–Weston believe that it's Toronto Centre that imposes its will on York South–Weston by virtue of its fewer residents? That is dictatorial.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): We'll now continue with further debate.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to say that it's a pleasure to join the debate. I have to tell you that after six years in this House this is a piece of legislation that has genuinely surprised me, obviously because it wasn't part of the platform; of course, the government had a very thin platform to run on in the election.

But even when the rumours came out the day before this announcement was made—and I would like to remind people that this announcement to reduce Toronto city council by over half was made 90 days before the municipal election; we are currently 74 days away from the municipal elections in this province—I was thinking at the time that this would be such an aggressive, brutish sort of move to make based on the number of candidates who had put their names forward.

Like many people in this House, I pay very close attention to municipal elections. I was a former trustee and ran in municipal elections. I have a lot of respect for people who have the courage and the conviction to stand in their place and go before their communities and put their name on a ballot. When I ran for school board trustee, I have to tell you, there was a level of accountability to local politics which we don't always feel at the provincial level—and certainly not at the federal level. If I ever got caught in the frozen food section talking about French immersion, I was there for a good half an hour.

So, it's a very, very intimate, very connected level of politics, where many of us learn how strong we are, in order to put our names forward for provincial or for federal. You get that bug; you get that rush of actually

helping people. Quite honestly, that's what prompted me to run for school board trustee and then, of course, for MPP.

I first had my connection with this place when Mike Harris Sr. was Premier. The reason that this move that was made by the Premier in such an aggressive manner affected me so deeply is because I used to work across the street at the old Toronto Board of Education. I was a settlement worker there. I used to come over here on my lunch hour and watch the original debate on amalgamation, on the original Bill 160. It prompted this memory to come forward because the goal of Mike Harris Sr.—we now have a Mike Harris Jr. here—then the Premier, was to amalgamate the cities to find efficiencies and savings, the same language that we're hearing today based on the reduction of the city of Toronto council.

The commentary from one of the policy researchers from the Fraser Forums—I would like to remind people in this House how that project, that experiment of amalgamation, failed the people of the greater Toronto area, and the effects of that amalgamation currently have not been fully realized. The chaos started, really, 20 years ago. This Premier has essentially doubled down on that chaos. This is directly from the Fraser Forum:

"Namely, Toronto is still struggling with the legacy of its 1998 amalgamation (between old Toronto, Scarborough, Etobicoke, York, North York, East York and Metro Toronto). According to the provincial government of the time, merging local governments, while simultaneously reducing the number of elected officials in these governments (one important piece of legislation in this process was named the 'Fewer Municipal Politicians Act'), would generate economies of scale, ultimately saving taxpayer money.

"Such benefits did not materialize.

"Rather than generating efficiencies, Toronto's amalgamation ushered in a period of increased spending on important services such as fire protection, garbage collection, and parks and recreation.... shrinking Toronto city council is not a good way to achieve" the goal of efficiencies and streamlining costs, "especially as Toronto continues to struggle with the legacy of amalgamation."

I see this action by this Premier to be an aggressive act, knowing that the city of Toronto still remains destabilized by the original amalgamation. He would know this because he sat as a city councillor. The chaos that existed during his tenure and his time as a city councillor has now been transferred literally up the street, here to Queen's Park.

I think the outstanding question, as well, for many people—and I met the mayor of Waterloo and some city councillors, because my office in the city of Waterloo is actually located with the federal member there. I like to call it "one-stop complaining," because everyone can come in and have their voices heard, which is an important part of our democratic process. It had this chilling effect on municipal politicians across the province. There was literally this sense of, "Who's going to be next? Will he get us? Will he look at Waterloo, perhaps?"

Ironically, the former member from Kitchener-Conestoga, Michael Harris—who I know is a friend of yours—had he put his name forward to run for regional chair, there was a lot of speculation that Waterloo would have lost their ability to directly elect their chair at the time. This was the cynicism, the distrust and the concern that people in Waterloo felt at the time, because there was no strategy, there was no plan, there was no warning before the city of Toronto was attacked in this manner.

I'm using strong language because I think the language is warranted, and I think that language matters in this place. When you think of individual citizens like Ausma Malik, for instance, who's running in ward 20—an amazing young woman who has served as a trustee at the Toronto District School Board. She announced on May 1, so her team was planning from January, February, March and April. She's an amazing community organizer. She went down to city council.

1630

This is a huge thing. It's a huge thing for a person to have the courage to do this, especially in this city where, quite honestly, incumbency has its advantages and there are pockets of power that hold onto that power and refuse to share it. I was just so incredibly proud of her, that she did this. Then the Premier comes along, 90 days before the election, and declares that the rules of the game have changed, confirming that it really is just a game for this Premier.

We on this side of the House view democratic processes with great integrity. We believe that there is a time and a place for healthy debate, and I think that that debate is so important when you are talking about the integrity and the dignity of our electoral institutions.

I'd like to quote David Miller, who called out the Premier's assault on Toronto council very shortly after this announcement was made. I'll quote him because he references the importance of a strong local government:

"Debates can sometimes be messy and chaotic, but we are the better for it. The existence of debate itself cannot possibly justify less of it. There is a beauty in the fact that an effective speech, an important amendment, a clear answer from a municipal civil servant during a question period can often change the outcome of a debate at city hall. It can only lead to a better result" for the people that they serve.

"Municipal government is very different. It is not just a place where important policies are debated and adopted. It's where local neighbourhood issues are addressed by residents together with their elected officials."

When I think of the role that those city councillors have and the importance of those debates, yes, they're messy and they're emotional. But when you are dealing with racism in our communities or disparity of income in the economy, or if we're talking about food deserts in our poorest communities in the city of Toronto or a lack of access to transit, these are fundamental issues that impact the quality of a person's life and their potential to be a strong and engaged and included citizen. These are important issues that the Premier dismissed with one wipe—just cleared off the whole desk.

So the question remains: Why just Toronto? Why just this city? Because there are many examples. Other members have drawn attention to how the Minister of Municipal Affairs—there are 10 mayors for 10 counties in his area. How do you justify having a mayor for a municipality of 5,200 people and then say, "We will run a more efficient government in the city of Toronto by imposing 100,000-plus residents on one city councillor"? There is no rationale. All we've heard from this Ford government is: "Less politicians. Nobody wants more politicians." It's so ironic, don't you think, that this Premier, whose father was a politician, who himself is a politician, whose brother is a politician, whose nephew is a politician—that these words come out of his mouth when his family is fully engaged in the political arena? And he calls for less politicians.

We have to call, we have to challenge—it is our parliamentary right to hold the government to account. It is our role as legislators to poke holes in the inconsistencies—which are so blatant to us and so obvious to the people of this city as well—in the rationale. Less politicians make for better government: There's no evidence whatsoever to prove that. Less representation for the people who need it the most? Yes.

Cost savings and efficiencies will be realized? No, they will not. We have enough research and enough evidence to show that—in fact, "2016 research on the role of elected officials in several British Columbia municipalities found that larger cities tend to have more high-paid municipal staff per council member than smaller municipalities."

The trend likely will apply to Toronto as well. So by doing so, by reducing the number of political representatives, the Doug Ford government is actually going to be creating a bigger government in the city of Toronto. I can't be the only one who finds this a little ironic.

It goes on to say, "Reducing the number of seats in council—while perhaps" very symbolic—because it does sound good. We hear a lot of sloganeering from this government and cheering. It's a locker room at question period in this place, Mr. Speaker. I've never seen the chanting and the standing ovations for pronouncing a word properly in this place. It is ridiculous. It really is.

But the fact of the matter is that the symbolism is recognized by the rest of the people. This gives me hope, it really does, because I see that people in this city, when—because this is going to pass. Bill 5 will pass. They have a majority government. Even though they have no mandate to do what they are doing, this legislation will pass.

But when the people of this city, this great city, can't get a hold of their representative, can't get access to the services they pay good taxes for, when they spend longer than an hour and a half or two hours one way on the way to work because their transit concerns haven't been addressed, when they still wait for affordable quality child care in the year 2018, by 2022, by the time of the next election, they will know who caused this chaos. It will be our job to remind them of it, and they will insist

on better government and better representation. While we move forward in this direction, we have to be mindful of how this will impact the people whom we care about and the people whom we have stood for election for.

This statement goes—this is still from the Fraser Institute; again, I have to say that I'm really surprised to do that: "However, reducing the number of seats in council—while perhaps a strong symbol—is not an effective way to achieve" the goal of efficiencies. "In fact, it may grow the size of government, consume more taxpayer money and reduce democratic accountability to boot.

"We know what happened when the provincial government forced amalgamation on Toronto two decades ago. If Ontario's new government wants to avoid those same mistakes, for the sake of taxpayers and their families, it should take a sober second look at its latest cost-cutting plan."

This is important context because—perhaps some of the members will not know how important 1998 was. I mean, that is the sex ed curriculum; it is true we are really going back in time. But it is important to know that that amalgamation was a failed project to find efficiencies and to streamline government. In fact, it had the opposite effect. We have evidence, and I've presented that evidence to you to demonstrate that this action by the Premier of the province to reduce city council in the manner in which he has done so will have the opposite effect of finding efficiencies, of strengthening local government and really, it compromises confidence in the democratic institutions for which we all stand.

When I think of my own mother, who is running for city council in Peterborough, and of a Premier who can be so rash and so quick and so disrespectful of the voices of the people who have decided to stand for office, I think that is a destabilizing effect on our democratic institutions. I share the concerns that David Miller communicated in the open letter. I will remind the members of the government that the right to vote and to participate in an election as an elector or as a candidate is a fundamental right and cannot, and should not, be changed on a whim, as Mr. Ford has seemingly done.

1640

This will reflect poorly on this entire Legislature when it does pass. It really will have a negative impact on our lives. It does lend itself to the question of how power impacts people, which is something that I've been very interested in for quite some time. For some of the new members, you will not know that on this side of the House we used to spend a lot of time with Conservatives. We would spend time in the back talking about Liberal plans and Liberal strategies and how disrespectful and arrogant Liberals had been. There was a common purpose that things were going to be corrected. There was going to be a correction, if you will, in how the people of this province were treated by this government, and yet you do this to them, to the city of Toronto, which is a significant amount of people.

I keep thinking of the minister responsible for this piece of legislation, the Minister of Municipal Affairs,

who, at the time, supported the direct election of regional chairs. He said this, and I want to put it into Hansard: "I think it speaks to the very core of our democracy.... I hope that members will support this legislation. And perhaps we can expand it at some point down the road for all of the regions in the province of Ontario." And yet, it is completely chilling that the Premier has specifically addressed these four direct regional chairs and denied the people in those regions access to their democratic right to directly vote for their chairs, because the government in the last session fully supported this move, and there's lots of Hansard to actually prove that.

At the time, the argument was that if you have direct voting for a regional chair, then it's not a popularity contest, so the person who is the chair of that region has a responsibility to the whole. He doesn't have to be nice to this Liberal or this New Democrat or this PC. She, that chair, has the responsibility to the region as a whole and to conduct the business of that region with integrity.

So here we are with Bill 5 before us. It will pass, but as I mentioned, I think there is hope, because if there was ever a level of government which directly impacts the quality of life and the potential of the citizens we serve, it is the municipal level. It is a very direct and connected level of that system. So for the people in this Legislature who are going to vote to reduce the representation at the city of Toronto, I guarantee you that in four years—in three years, 10 months and three days, but who's counting—there will be a day of accountability when the people of this great city will hold this government to account for reducing their democratic rights and their ability to access their representation and actually receive the services they pay tax dollars for.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the commentary. I'm sure it will be very colourful and filled with slogans.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to hear the members of the opposition, and you can tell what the fundamental difference is. Better government does not mean bigger government, full stop. It is the fundamental difference between our side of the House, the government, and the opposition; that is, you can still give fair representation without large taxation and big government.

Let's bring it back to what the people really want and what the people have elected their government to do. It is to respect taxpayer dollars. That was what the last election was about. People had no respect for politicians because politicians had no respect for taxpayer dollars. Right now, we have the opportunity to make history, to say, "Look, we're going to save the taxpayer \$25 million on presenting better government, less government, less intrusive government but good representation."

For myself, I've worked on all three different levels of government, and I will say that the reason people want to get involved in their local government, whether it be municipal, provincial or federal, is to make a difference.

It's to represent their constituents. It's to work hard. It's not an easy job, and I commend everyone for running in the last election, because it's not an easy job. That's why when you get into this business, it's about working hard, pulling up your sleeves, putting in some elbow time. That's what it's about.

Just because you have a smaller government does not mean you have less representation. Yes, it means you have to work harder, but that's what people expect and that's what they pay taxpayer dollars for. I think we need to bring it back to the basics here, and that is, what are we really paying for and what were people expecting? People go to work and they have to cover many shifts. People go to work and they have to cover many positions. Why should politicians be held to a different standard? I don't think they should be.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Yarde: As we know, the Premier has many slogans, and we've been hearing a lot of slogans lately. "Stopping the gravy train" is one of them. "For the people" is another one. There is a new one, of course. With the unilateral, undemocratic slashing of Toronto city council to 25 members, he's now using the slogan of "more politicians." He's saying that anybody who says that more politicians are needed, there's something wrong with them. He's been saying that on Twitter.

But there's something wrong with that. You really have to look underneath that, Mr. Speaker. It sounds plausible at first but when you really look at it, it's going to mean more politicians. Now, the member from Barrie-Innisfil says it will mean less bigger government, but unfortunately, it will be more government. With 25 councillors, there will be more staffers looking after the work that a politician would have to do. There will be more bureaucrats, of course, with regard to this as well.

Generally what happens is that when you have politicians and you have constituents who are watching you, it lights a fire under you and you do your job. Unfortunately, with staffers and bureaucrats, they're the ones who will be doing the work and not the councillors. Granted, some councillors at city hall are hollow shirts and they really don't go to work, just like the Premier did when he was the councillor for Etobicoke North.

But in the end what we need is a city hall that's going to be respectful to all politicians, and definitely we need fair representation. The fact that the Conservatives did not consult and did not tell us they were going to do this is something which a lot of people, of course, are feeling is an abomination for them to do and something they should have never done. They should have spoken to the people first of all before they did what they did.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member from Waterloo for her contribution to the debate today. I have to say, I don't like the fact that you've demeaned my colleagues and myself by suggesting that our comments are going to be full of sloganeering and that kind of

commentary. The member from Brampton North, as well, pointed out the same thing. I think that's inappropriate, frankly. We earned the right to be here, just as you did, and we have a right to say what we think. If we believe that being a government for the people is good, then that's what we get to say. And we do believe that.

The member opposite talks about wanting to hear the voices of the people but, of course—and they've accused us of the same thing—they only want to hear the voices of the people when it suits them. So on this issue they want to hear the voices of the people. On the York strike, they wanted to hear the voices of the people. On consultations regarding the sex ed curriculum, they don't want to hear the voices of the people. They're inconsistent and undemocratic when it suits them as well. You can criticize us, but you're guilty of exactly the same thing.

The other thing I wanted to say was, Andrea Horwath, your leader, said—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Hey, hey: Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Sorry. The Leader of the Opposition said—my apologies; it slipped out. She said, "A little less conversation, a little more action." So I'd just like to quote her. That's what we're doing here. We're doing a little action; we're bringing action back into this government. We're going to try to reform the government. Will it solve all the problems? Probably not. But hopefully it will make the government of Toronto more functional, and that's what we're trying to do.

You criticized the amalgamation, but Barbara Hall, a former mayor of Toronto, said that amalgamation "has done some good things, such as increase access to city services for people outside of the downtown core."

1650

So there will be some good things this will achieve as well, even you will have to admit it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to try to add something new to the comments that my colleague from Waterloo made. Thank you for those comments and thank you to the folks who commented afterward.

Again, friends across the aisle, I offer you a warning: It may be prophetic in a year, it may not, but I think it will be. I wrote a book in 2013 on political organizing. One of the cases I studied was the library dispute in this great city. When the Premier, who was then working with his brother in the mayor's office, mentioned that in his area of the city there were more libraries than Tim Hortons, it set off a firestorm of controversy in the city. I think they had the kind of "damn the torpedoes" approach I see my friends taking now, "We'll wear it, we need it, we need to take action, and we're going to be known as people of action." But Mayor Rob Ford, at that time, and the Premier paid a big price. It was the one moment I can say that in Rob Ford's mandate as mayor of the city of Toronto he suffered a serious consequence because he didn't listen to the community.

People that I'm familiar with in the city of Toronto—not just the downtown councillors but councillors across this great city, regardless of how many people they represent—work really hard; extremely hard. When I hear people say things like, “They’ll just have to work harder,” I try to figure out a way in which we can develop another universe of time before 24 hours; believe me, I’d like to, some days, given my schedule.

Given the schedule that I see people keeping now, I can only assume that people will be receiving less service from their representatives. When the consequences of that come to reap and the whirlwind comes to reap in another year or two years, beware. The people of this city are outspoken, they’re proud and they’ll demand access to their politicians and, in the new electoral map, it’s the government that made that electoral map that will pay the price. You have an opportunity now to avoid that consequence.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now back to the member from Waterloo for final comments.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you to all of the MPPs who shared their opinions on my 20-minute commentary on Bill 5.

To the member for Barrie–Innisfil: I think—and I made the point and demonstrated some evidence—that through your actions, through this piece of legislation, you will actually be creating bigger government, and this runs counter to your rationalization.

To the member for Eglington–Lawrence: I want to tell you, I find the sloganeering to be offensive. I find it to be a race to the bottom in this Legislature. I find the standing ovations for pronouncing a word properly to be offensive. I think we need to be debating the policies of this government and of this legislation. That is our job as the official opposition. I think that a little more action—a little less conversation, a little more action.

This government has been intent on creating chaos in this place. You have made so many drastic, rash decisions that it’s actually overwhelming for people, and they see through it. The media is doing their job in holding this government to account by actually outlining all of the changes that you have made without measure—without measure of the intent, without measure of the consequences. And this is one of those things.

When the government says that they respect taxpayers, I would like to remind them that there was an extensive process to decide the current boundaries and decision to raise the number of wards from 44 to 47. The position now advanced by this government was an option presented at the Ontario Municipal Board and it was rejected. The result was upheld in the Ontario courts through legal challenges and appeal. Mr. Ford’s, the Premier’s, arbitrary action goes against the spirit, and arguably the letter, of the City of Toronto Act and our constitution.

Shame on your government for taking this action.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I feel very honoured to rise to speak on Bill 5, the Better Local Government

Act, 2018. If I may, I could say I’m a walking history who has witnessed how Toronto city council has evolved and where it will be moving forward to with Bill 5.

For the first time, I was elected as a Metro Toronto councillor in 1991, and I was re-elected eight consecutive times, altogether serving the city of Toronto for 25 years.

Mr. Speaker, I’d like to begin with a story. Many years ago, there was a wise king. One day, the king decided he wanted to know more about his cabinet and who they were. He summoned his kind and generous social services minister and his tough national security minister. He said, “I have a project for both of you ministers. To my minister of social services, I ask you to travel the country and bring me 10 bad people, and to my minister of security, I ask you to bring me 10 good people. You both have one month.” The ministers left. They were certain this would be an easy test, but one month later they returned to the king empty-handed. “I could not find a single bad person,” said the social services minister. “I could not find one single good person, my king,” said the security minister.

The moral of the story is that we see others as a reflection of ourselves, our experiences and through the lens of title. Before the opposition characterizes the Premier as a bully or a dictator, they should reflect and try to see their real selves.

Mr. Speaker, last week the NDP member from Toronto–Danforth tried to paint former mayor the late Rob Ford in a negative light. Mayor Ford loved Toronto and worked tirelessly for the people of the city. Privatizing garbage collection west of Yonge Street and cancelling the vehicle registration tax saved millions and removed an incredible financial burden off taxpayers. He did this because he loved this city. He and his brother, then-Councillor Doug Ford, fought hard to help Torontonians and knew better than anyone how dysfunctional the huge Toronto city council was.

I know almost all the Toronto city councillors. They are hard-working people. At the same time, I know that Toronto city council was dysfunctional. How else can you explain voting 10 times for the Scarborough subway and then, still, we don’t have a Scarborough subway?

Years ago—1998, to be exact—when I was a Metro councillor, I remember when the Mike Harris government brought in legislation to amalgamate the two-tiered governance of Toronto. Back then, there were six municipalities: East York, Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough, Toronto and York, and one higher level of government, Metro Toronto, with many councillors. The Mike Harris government decided to eliminate the two layers of government with 106 councillors and replace it with one layer of 56 councillors. But that exercise was not just reducing the size of council; it had more to do with amalgamating the municipalities—amalgamating the bureaucracy, the services that we were providing, realizing savings through streamlining the way we were doing business at the city level before amalgamation.

Back then, everyone complained that Mike Harris was attacking Toronto. They didn’t know that what followed

were more amalgamations, like in the city of Hamilton and in Ottawa. In fact, prior to 1998, there were more than 800 municipalities in Ontario. Today, in Ontario, we have 444 municipalities. Even the Liberal government amalgamated municipalities as well.

When the Mike Harris government introduced Bill 103, the opposition screamed that he had a vendetta against the left-leaning council of the city of Toronto. They said that Mike Harris was trying to eliminate his enemies.

1700

At the time, I did not meet a single resident who complained that there would be fewer politicians. We started with six mayors, one Metro chair and six fire chiefs. Now we have one mayor and one fire chief, and the important thing to residents was that they would receive more or less the same level of service as before.

Mr. Speaker, I admit that I was one of the councillors who opposed amalgamation in 1998. We fought vigorously against it. Some of us, I know, were concerned that our jobs were at stake. But some of us were fighting because we believed that the people, the residents and the taxpayers were against it. Today, according to the Toronto Star opinion poll, 71% of Torontonians are in support of reducing the number of councillors from 47 to 25.

I found it really strange that even before the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing introduced Bill 5 on July 30, the Leader of the Opposition and her colleagues one by one stood up during question period to denounce a bill that was not even introduced. Finally, the Minister of Municipal Affairs introduced Bill 5. Moments after the introduction of the bill, seven NDP members in this Legislature—the members from University–Rosedale, Toronto Centre, York South–Weston, Toronto–St. Paul's, Beaches–East York, Scarborough Southwest and Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas—all read out almost the exact same petition. I found it odd that the seven members had not heard the bill, yet they had all prepared a similar petition opposing it.

On June 7, the people of Ontario gave Doug Ford a clear mandate to reduce the size of government, and that is why Bill 5 was introduced in this Legislature. Premier Doug Ford isn't just preaching smaller government, but practising what he preaches. For example, the previous Liberal government had 30 cabinet ministers. The current PC government has reduced the number to 21 ministers. Minister MacLeod is responsible for five ministries, including social services, children and youth services, women's issues, anti-racism and immigration and citizenship. Minister Clark covers two ministries, municipal affairs and housing. Minister Rickford covers two huge ministries, energy and indigenous affairs. I cover two ministries, seniors and accessibility. We simply work harder and, at the same time, more efficiently.

The size of council is way too big. Successive mayors, from Lastman to Ford and others, all have complained that they cannot manage the number of councillors. They have a hard time passing legislation that would be good

for all, because the councillors have built alliances on issues and were divided into downtown and suburban regions. The mayor often would have to back down to these alliances. That is why council would never reduce on its own, even though they know it would be beneficial to the taxpayers.

If we reduce the size of council, Toronto property taxpayers will be the ultimate winners. We will save \$25 million over four years; \$25 million is equivalent to a 2% reduction in the residential property tax.

This government is committed to restoring accountability and public trust in government. We can help guide the city of Toronto to become leaner and more efficient.

Mr. Speaker, my time is up. I would like to say, in closing, that we promised to reduce the size of government, and we are keeping our promise. Promise made; promise kept.

I will hand it off to my colleague the member from Scarborough–Agincourt.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now recognize the member from Scarborough–Agincourt.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of Bill 5, the Better Local Government Act. As the MPP for Scarborough–Agincourt and a long-time resident of Toronto, I truly do believe in ensuring that our local government works for us, the people. The large size of Toronto city council has rendered the highest decision-making body in our city dysfunctional and inefficient. Days-long meetings, bickering and a sharp division between downtown and suburban councillors make this change necessary and important for the residents of our city.

In November 2014, Ian Urquhart wrote in the Toronto Star about the need to reduce the size of Toronto city council. Mr. Urquhart made a comparison between Toronto and other major cities in North America, like New York, and argued that the sheer size of our city council had created gridlock, competing agendas and an unsustainable governing model for the residents of Toronto. Additionally, in July 2017, Sue-Ann Levy in the Toronto Sun made the same argument.

Since the introduction of this bill, members of the official opposition have stood firmly against the reduction in size of Toronto's city council. I am baffled by this opposition. The bill clearly makes sense to both the right and the left, and the reduction in the size of our city council has been pushed forward for years. To me, it is clear that the official opposition is recklessly opposing a bill that received support from ordinary citizens and pundits alike. The opposition keeps pushing for a dysfunctional Toronto city council. Why, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, I'm not keen on supporting such a disorganized and dysfunctional local governing model. As a resident of Toronto, I know that my office and I have received many calls supporting the decision to reduce the city council's size. This past long weekend, I attended a number of events in my riding. Time and again, residents came to express their support for this much-needed change. People in my riding are keen to see

a Toronto city council and city hall that function and work in an effective and efficient way.

Despite what politicians on the left have said, Toronto's residents understand that this bill is a step forward in our government's commitment to respecting the taxpayers. By reducing the size of our city council, not only will meetings become less cumbersome; this government will ensure that every citizen in our city receives the same level of representation. Bill 5 will ensure that voter parity is achieved in Toronto. The Supreme Court of Canada stated that this is a condition of effective representation. This change will ensure that voters in Scarborough will have an equal voice to those living in downtown wards.

1710

Over the past number of days, I have spoken with so many of my city council colleagues who have also expressed support for the changes proposed by this government. Jim Karygiannis, a long-time politician and advocate for Scarborough, stated that the current and proposed representative model does not work for the people of my riding. He stated, and I quote, "While my new ward 43 will have 69,000 constituents, there are some downtown wards that will have a mere 30,000 plus. Where is the equal representation for the residents of Toronto?"

Mr. Speaker, allow me to echo Mr. Karygiannis: Where is the equal representation for Torontonians? Where is the equal representation for those who call our city suburbs home? This ineffective model has left our city fractured along urban and suburban lines.

For far too long, city council has been held hostage to the special interest groups and downtown councillors. In fact, the vast majority of Scarborough councillors support this bill. Michelle Holland, Gary Crawford, Michael Thompson, Glenn De Baeremacker, Jim Karygiannis and Norm Kelly have all expressed support. This support demonstrates a need for the proposed changes.

To me, this does not only sound fair, but it ensures that we, as residents and voters of Toronto, will be able to have our agenda heard at our city's highest decision-making body.

Looking into the future, changes in the city and demographics of our city will reflect in the number of city council seats allocated to each part and ward. By reflecting the same number of provincial and federal representatives, Toronto's council will grow and change in accordance with the decision made by an independent body and not at the behest of self-serving politicians and interest groups.

A number of years ago, residents of Scarborough were consulted time and again. City council voted time and again to expand the subway service to Scarborough Centre, yet special interest groups and downtown councillors have attempted to block the progress of this project. They claim that Scarborough does not need or require the same level of services as downtown Toronto.

In order to shift this power imbalance, this legislation would focus on areas like my riding in Scarborough—Agincourt. For example, Sussex Strategy Group

published a report a number of days ago, and I quote: "The other likely effect is that this legislative change will provide support to the suburban regions and their interests, rather than the continued focus on downtown wards that Toronto has seen in the last term." This, to me, sounds like a win for residents and voters of Scarborough and other suburban areas of our city.

The subway debate in Scarborough revolves around a need for a fast, effective and congestion-reducing transit option. However, downtown Toronto councillors, community activists and special interest groups have advocated for the construction of LRT lines.

People are generally not happy when government makes their transit options slow, ineffective and without forethought, particularly when you build a line leading to nowhere, as Scarborough residents and I have seen with the incomplete Sheppard line. As such, Scarborough residents and councillors have continued to push for the building and construction of a subway line.

I am sad to say that the official opposition and its leader have clearly advocated for the dysfunctional status quo. Why they believe in a dysfunctional local government for the people of Toronto is beyond me. This is an insult to the people of Scarborough.

We will also ensure that an MP, MPP and ward councillor serve places like Scarborough—Agincourt without need for blurred lines and uncertainty about who represents the residents and voters in my riding. Currently, my office receives multiple calls in one day from residents—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Further questions and comments?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I think it's wonderful that I have an opportunity to provide two minutes' worth of my own experience right after my colleague from Scarborough—Agincourt, because that is where I was born and raised. I was living in Scarborough—Agincourt at the time of the amalgamation.

Part of what was problematic during amalgamation was that nobody told us what was happening or what those benefits to the amalgamation actually were supposed to be. As much as people will argue in this space that consultations happened, for a lot of people on the ground that's not what it feels like because their voices aren't heard. Now that I'm here—and it's like I'm having a déjà vu—and we're going through this again, it's the exact same feeling.

That's the reason why a lot of the people on this side of the House are saying that this is chilling. It's scary to think that the government will act in a way that doesn't respect the intelligence of the people who are going to be the most impacted by those changes. It's especially difficult to swallow when, on the one hand, we're told that this is something that's good for everybody and, on the other hand, the rules are different depending on where you are.

So it leaves us with a lot of different questions and, for me in particular, it leaves me with that memory of not knowing what was going to happen in Scarborough when

all of a sudden I woke up and Scarborough became Toronto.

I can't actually put my finger on any of the benefits. As my colleague from Waterloo had mentioned, it's likely because there weren't benefits, that we're actually still in the turmoil of the first amalgamation, and now we find ourselves in the midst of yet another.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Doug Downey: I want to thank the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility and the member for Scarborough-Agincourt for their comments.

For those who remember the amalgamation days, the 45-sized council now is not some magic number. It came about because there were 22 federal ridings. It was around that time that we were aligning provincial riding boundaries with federal riding boundaries for a good reason. We had ridings, federally, that had up to three and four provincial ridings touching on them. There was chaos all over the place. When the amalgamation happened provincially, we set it up so that the ward boundaries matched the federal and the soon-to-be provincial ridings. So there was a pure logic to it.

Now, what did they do? It happened during the first term of Mayor Lastman. It came into effect for the second. What we did, though, was we said, "We have all these councillors"—we went from 106 councillors down to two per ward. Why two? I don't know. But it used to be that the councillor in a ward that got the most votes was the regional councillor and the other was a local councillor, so they kind of were used to working with two in an area. But they didn't do that. They didn't take the wards and put two in an area; they split them in half geographically, and all of a sudden we had a ton of them.

The minister knows—he lived through it and he shared some of his experiences with us. I think it's valuable that we hear from the people who went through that and that we hear from the people who were on the ground, who knocked on doors—thousands and thousands of doors—and heard that we want more efficient government.

I think we are doing exactly what the people want us to do. We are doing it for the people. I don't hear the opposition arguing that Toronto is functioning properly at all. I haven't heard that at all through this whole debate. Nobody is making the pitch that it's operating properly. We need to do something.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: What about consultation? What about consulting the people of Toronto? Reducing the size of the city council from 47 to 25 is not democratic. What about council candidates who have been campaigning since last year? Chiara Padovani comes to mind, in ward 11, who has been campaigning very hard to represent ward 11. Now, all of a sudden, the government changes the rules.

1720

You can change the rules, but what we are asking on this size is to make sure that the people of Toronto have

been consulted in the process. Because it's very important that the people you pretend to represent—you say, "We are a government for the people." In this case, this government fails because you are imposing something that you have not consulted the people of Toronto on. That is undemocratic, because what you are going to do will create less service. What we want for the people of Toronto is more service, with people being listened to and provided with those services.

Reducing from 47 to 25 does not serve the people of Toronto. I urge all the members from Toronto, the 11 Conservative members, to think about it and to think about the people of Toronto. We need strong voices here in Toronto on the other side to make sure the people of Toronto have an effective voice. This bill and this legislation will actually do the other way, where the people of Toronto will not have more service but less service.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Deepak Anand: First of all, I would like to thank the member from Scarborough North, the minister, for his long-standing commitment to the people—24 years. Wow. That's amazing. Thank you to the member for Scarborough-Agincourt as well for your comments.

Before this, I was listening to the member from Ottawa Centre—very passionate. One thing I want to add to this is that when you say "that side," just remember: This is part of that side as well.

You talked about those potatoes. I want to add that with those small potatoes of \$6.3 million, what we can do is actually—I'm taking this clipping from the Toronto Star. With \$6.3 million, we can invest in 215 affordable rental homes—we can do that; we can buy 120 power stretchers for Toronto paramedics; or we can use this money to buy increased enforcement—40 new CCTV cameras—so that we can combat gun violence. This is what we can do—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I'd like to remind the member to address through the Chair, please. Thank you.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Mr. Speaker, what I'm trying to say is that we are going to reduce the size and the cost of Toronto city hall so that city hall can make decisions. When things will be done faster, I'm pretty sure the people of Toronto are going to thank us for doing this in a timely manner.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now I return to the member from Scarborough-Agincourt for his final comments.

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their comments.

I just want to add the following: The aggravated citizens of Toronto are frustrated, and now some, in places like Scarborough, have felt the need to call for separating our city into separate municipalities once again. Since 2016, Robert McDermott has led a movement that calls for Scarborough to become its own municipal entity again.

I'm of the opinion that Scarborough is better served by a Toronto city hall that works democratically for all living in our city. However, calls like the ones made by Mr. McDermott should give politicians at all levels of government a moment to think about the reality of the dysfunctional representation at Toronto city hall. This, to me, represents the difficult reality we face in Scarborough. Citizens feel neglected, separate, and their voice is not heard at the municipal level. Bill 5 ensures that this reality changes at the municipal level.

In a recent online poll conducted by CityNews, around 60% of Torontonians expressed their support for our government bill. Ordinary citizens are clearly fed up with the status quo, and I am happy to support changes that will lead to better representation, better local government and, most importantly, a better-governed city for us and for our kids in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I want to finish by speaking to an important matter. Residents in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt and across this province voted for change on June 7, 2018—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and one half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of the bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader or a minister specifies otherwise.

I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. John Yakabuski: It is the desire of the government that the debate continue at this time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I'd like to begin by explaining that Bill 5 scares me. Bill 5 scares me primarily because of the lack of transparency with which each one of the items in Bill 5 has been made. What worries me most is that this becomes another example of leadership across Ontario.

We've centred a lot of our debate on Toronto. We've centred a lot of our debate on what the people here are feeling—those who gathered outside in the sweltering heat to make their voices heard, those who came inside the Legislature and interrupted proceedings because that was the only way that they felt they could be heard. We've spent some time speaking about some of the other areas that have fought for a long time to elect a regional chair, only to now find out that that will no longer happen.

A lot of the language used on our side of the House has been about the lack of respect for democracy as well as the chilling nature of those decisions. So I stand up today and I can't say anything other than the fact that I have to agree.

Yesterday I was painstakingly reading through Bill 5, and the only thing I could think about was 1984. There were so many places within this bill where we were being asked—actually, obligated—to pretend that an election had not already started. We were being obligated

to pretend that people hadn't already put their names forward and started their campaigns. We were being asked to pretend that monetary loss would now be endured by people who had finally had the courage to put their names forward. Between 1984 and my time working at Ryerson in the Diversity Institute, under the direction of Dr. Wendy Cukier, I couldn't help but think about the women, and the racialized women in particular, who had put their names forward to run in Toronto.

There are a number of reports and statistics that say that if you actually want to diversify positions of power and influence, women have to be asked more often than the men. Many men, whether they have the experience or the skills or not, will take that leap, will take that chance, because these systems are already set up to allow them to learn on the job. It's not the same thing for a woman, and it's not the same thing for a woman of colour.

In fact, I'm pretty sure that it was just the day before we heard that the Premier had made this decision to make all sorts of changes during an election that the Toronto Star had a number of articles that were written that were actually speaking about the diversity of candidates as something they had never seen before. When we take a step back and we think about the pros and cons of putting a bill like this through, I can't help but be reminded of that.

1730

I did some research, because sometimes I get confused about whether it's 1998 or 2018. George Orwell wrote 1984 in 1949. One of the best pieces, for me, was the Ministry of Truth. I feel like that is what we're experiencing right now.

For example, when I read in schedule 2, "Nothing in section 218.1 limits the power of a municipality referred to in subsection 218.1(1) or (2) to change the method of selecting its head of council under section 218 for any regular election after 2018," I start to wonder: Why are we focused on 2018? Why am I only regulated to do what the Premier would like now, and then, next year or next election, I can change my mind? Why are the rules only set at this point? That's the piece that's chilling.

I actually wonder if the reason that the government is not hearing the same kinds of criticism is because people are too scared to present that criticism to the government at this time. I can tell you that being in Kitchener, there are questions that keep coming up about what will happen in Waterloo region, to the point that people are unwilling to say to me—who is supposed to be here to represent their interests—how they're actually feeling about what's going on. They're scared. If that's the kind of leadership we have in Ontario, I'm scared, because it doesn't allow me to do my job.

It took my colleague in Waterloo a number of requests for me to run. When I finally made the decision to run, had something like this happened midway through the election, I would not be sitting here. I would have likely thought that that was a sign that I shouldn't run. I have to say that I can add something, now that I'm here, to this debate, so that would be a loss for the province. I'm not

saying that from a place of ego; I'm saying that from my experience in orientation, where we were told we are a select few people who will have this honour of standing in this place. I'm saying that for the people who look towards all of us, on every single side of this House, to find hope.

This bill does not provide me with hope. This provides me with fear, because it's coming after a slew of other bills that have unilaterally changed the face of Ontario. In four years, we may not even know what the full impact of these changes will be. That, to me, is chilling, because I have children that want to come here and experience Ontario in a way that would be supportive. And yet, the rules could change in the midst of the game, and then, there could be a decision that in the municipality of Waterloo, everything is different once again.

I don't know how to go home and explain that to my kids. I don't know how to explain to my children that it's okay for the government, in 2018, to unilaterally change the rules of the game in the midst of an election, because it took a long time for me to explain to my children that this is what the election process actually is.

I also—while I'm doing that, because it's 1984—have to go back and explain to my children that there is some kind of rationale, which I can't quite understand, for going backwards 20 years in the sex ed curriculum, that there is some kind of rationale for going backwards when it comes to the saving the environment, that there is some kind of rationale for going backwards when it comes to reconciliation. Those are just a few of the things that I have to now take some time to figure out how to explain.

I'm also extremely worried about what this says for leadership in Ontario, and this is me just taking a step back and thinking about how we demonstrate strong leadership. I had mentioned this before, and I can't help but say it again: It doesn't matter how many people are sitting around the table at city council. It really doesn't matter. It's about what we understand to be leadership. Is it one person at the helm who has all the power that can change the rules, or is there a decision that we're going to speak across the table, across our interests, engage in debate on, and actually be open to changing our minds? For me and for many of the people who are in the NDP caucus, leadership—true, authentic leadership—is being open to listening to what people have to say.

What's worrisome to me is that embedded within Bill 5 is not that. I don't know how to stand behind Bill 5 with integrity because there is nothing that I can hold on to that allows me to understand why the changes are happening, and part of my integrity comes with being able to have a clear rationale—not just “Promise made, promise kept,” because when we say that, there is nothing that explains why the promise was made in the first place.

It's like when I'm talking to my children, and one child tries to take something from the other child—because I have three of them. I have to say, “It's time to say sorry.” Do they just say sorry or do they actually explain what it is they did, what the impact was, and

understand internally why they won't do it again? Unfortunately, I feel like I have to make this point to the government. I think it's important for us to be able to explain why we're making the change, what the impact is that we hope to have—not a decrease of numbers; they can change all the numbers they want to, but what is the impact, what's the difference—and answer what the other people are saying the impact will be to them, which is kind of my last little bit of this discussion.

One of the things I've learned doing equity work is that it really doesn't matter what I say or what I put on paper. It doesn't matter if I put “Doctor” before my name or if I ask people to say “Miss” or if I say “MPP.” If the people who I'm speaking to don't understand what I'm saying, I have more work to do. It's not them that have to pull up their socks; it's me. That's leadership. So if there is a group of people, whether it's 10 people or just one, that says, “I don't understand,” my job, because I take my position of leadership seriously and I walk with integrity and dignity, is to find a different way to explain it so that they can understand. But that's if I actually want them to know what it is that I'm doing and why.

So we're back to square one. But guess what? There's hope. I've been dying to put this on the record. The Pulitzer Prize—isn't this great? There's enough time, eight long minutes. The Pulitzer Prize, which was first awarded in 1917, is awarded for achievements in newspapers, magazines, online journalism, literature and musical compositions. In 2018, Kendrick Lamar was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his album called *Damn*, which documented the African American experience in the US. It was something that they had never done before.

If the Pulitzer Prize can make a decision, if the judges of the Pulitzer Prize can decide that this kind of music, rap, and this kind of topic, the realities of fear and pain and desire for love and the humanity of Black people in 2018, can actually be considered excellence, then I want to believe—I'm going to breathe real deep now—that this government in 2018 can pull themselves up by their bootstraps and decide to listen, to govern with integrity, to actually be awarded, like, a Pulitzer Prize of governing. That's on the record.

I think it's important for us to be honest. I think if people aren't willing to take a step back and actually listen—

Interjection.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Mr. Speaker, I'm not really supposed to be paying attention, but I actually want to pay attention to what was just said there. It could be that I'm not listening, or it could be that I am. It could be that he's not listening either. It doesn't really matter. The point is this: How do we want to lead in Ontario? That's my question.

Interjection.

1740

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: It doesn't matter. How do we want to lead? I want to lead with integrity, and I will keep doing that, whether they yell slogans at me, with or

without a buck a beer. I will stand up and I will speak my truth, and I will speak the truth of the people I represent, and nobody heckling will change that. What I'm hopeful for is that they will choose to do the same: that while they sit in their caucus and discuss the impact of what's happened, that they're honest, that they don't ignore me, that they don't ignore my voice or my ideas, and that one day I get into my office and there's a knock on the door from one of my colleagues across the way.

Interjections.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Right? And they come on by and they say, "You know what? You were talking about Nineteen Eighty-Four. Do you have a copy of that there book in your office? I'd like to sit down and start a book club, because we could talk it out." I think that's part of what we're supposed to be doing.

I think that there's a long line of us who have somehow been involved in politics and felt that it has to happen a particular way, that they can't or shouldn't or don't want to listen to what other people are saying, and I believe that we can do differently. If the Pulitzer Prize can be awarded to Kendrick Lamar, then I believe that we can find a way to govern, even in the midst of the complete and utter chaos that Bill 5 just might create.

So, with four more minutes on the clock, I think it's time for us to think a little bit about the importance of honesty. When I'm leading, there are going to be moments when I have to do things—let's say, going back to my children—that my children don't necessarily want me to do. Because I'm the adult in the family, I sometimes have to make them go to the dentist when they don't want to go to the doctor or go to the doctor when they don't want to go to the dentist. I can choose to force them to go, drop them off and have them yell, and that's the way I'm going to lead, or I can sit them down and explain the benefits.

All people are asking for, not just in Toronto but across Ontario, is for the government to sit down and show us the benefits. Talk to us. When regular people who are struggling to survive on ODSP—which hasn't been increased fully, so it's a cut, but maybe it's not a cut, but that's the Ministry of Truth, so we'll talk about that later; as my people say, "stick a pin." the reality is that when we end up struggling on our day-to-day with the last \$5 we have in our pockets, the large spewing of discussions around \$25 million literally means nothing. I don't understand that, and that's the reality.

How else can we explain the benefit in a way that allows me to actually engage, so that I could then tell my colleagues, or I could tell my friend, or I could talk to my family or, most importantly—because the government has made it very clear that parents are the best educators—I could tell my kids? I'm telling you that with my doctorate in education, I cannot sit down with my children and explain to them anything that the government is doing right now, not because I don't want to—that's why we ask the questions—but because there is no clarity.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Or answers.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: There are no answers, and that's the honesty piece that I feel is lacking. I honestly want to be able to tell my children that they don't have to worry tomorrow. Unfortunately, I have to be worried, because I don't know what's happening tomorrow.

With Bill 5, that's probably how a lot of people felt who had put their name forward to actually run for the first time. After getting a whole support network around them, as we all did to be here, they have to now figure out what they're going to do next. That level of uncertainty is really frightening, and it requires us—again, if we want to be strong leaders, Mr. Speaker—to rebuild that trust.

So my other question for the government is: How do we rebuild the trust? How do you rebuild the trust after Bill 5 is going to come, after we forced a bunch of students back to work at York, after we've decided that we're unilaterally going to have a plan to have a climate change plan—not a plan, but just a discussion about the potential of having a plan uninterrupted? Even that doesn't make sense.

Now we have Bill 5 saying that in some places, maybe sometimes you'll be able to elect somebody and no discussion of how a decision will be made in the places where there is no election. How do I know who will be put into the leadership position in Niagara or Peel? How do I know? And how can I trust when there has been this level of uncertainty and chill? How do I trust? I can't imagine that anybody here would tell their children to trust this, and I know that I can't tell mine.

My hope is that there will be a knock on the door and somebody somewhere will show up. "What room am I in? Room 170. Come and talk to me and explain to me"—

Interjection.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Somebody will—"explain to me what it is we're trying to do." I would be more than willing—it's part of my job—to provide some insight into the kinds of things that I, on the ground, would want to see to start to rebuild that trust, piece by piece by piece. Taking a minute and saying, "We're going to review this before we move forward," would be one of the first steps in actually taking seriously the concerns that have come into this House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. David Piccini: I thank the member opposite for her comments. On her point on diversity, I have to say that those poignant words—we absolutely agree with your assertions on this side of the House. In fact, many on this side work with groups like Equal Voice to ensure—

Hon. John Yakabuski: And that side, too.

Mr. David Piccini: —and on that side; all sides work with groups like Equal Voice. I agree with that, but it's a shame the NDP member's comments on diversity are used with all of this other sensational language that we've heard over the past weeks, this Orwellian tone, "scared, anti-democratic, dictator," terms we've

heard from that side that do nothing to improve debate in this place—nothing.

She wondered why these changes are happening. I'll gladly elaborate on why these changes are happening. It's because Ontarians were sick and tired of bloated government. They were sick and tired of waste and mismanagement. That is why Ontarians, on June 7, elected 76 PC members to this place.

This holier-than-thou attitude, implying we are in government without integrity—you know, I was elected, Mr. Speaker, on a clear mandate. I was elected with the highest voter turnout in the province of Ontario. I've received hundreds of emails from constituents of mine—I know they don't share their views and their sensibilities get hurt when they don't. But I received hundreds of emails from those who are supporting our decision, and as of 5 o'clock today, there have been 13 emails from those opposing the decision we've made.

Come on. If you really want to listen to Ontarians, you've got to accept that there are Ontarians who hold opposing viewpoints from you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rest my case.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I've been here for some 28 years, and I've never been more humbled by a speech by a first-time member than I have been today. What was said today was, I thought, quite frankly, a pretty remarkable speech in understanding what the crux of the issue is. For a member to come into this House with such an understanding tells me that we are in good hands for the future because, clearly, this member understands what the cut and thrust of this Legislature is supposed to be all about.

Many years ago, we used to be ruled by a king or a queen, and it was only them who had the say of what has to happen when it came to the people. The building of the House of Commons and the system we call Parliament was about giving the people, through the commons, the ability to have a say about what's going to happen. Everybody understood that somebody has to make the decision and somebody has to rule. But the purpose of the House of Commons is that in order for the people to have their say—I think what the member was saying was, when a government decides it can circumvent the people by not sending a bill to committee and giving the public the opportunity to come before this committee and say, "I love this bill," or, "I hate this bill, and here are the reasons why," it is quite frankly not respectful of what our forefathers who built the parliamentary system were all about. It was about making sure that the hands of government are not controlled by one person, but are controlled by the people through the commons, which is the House of Commons or the Legislature.

1750

The argument that the government puts forward—"But we have a majority. We know best. We don't have to listen to the people"—I think is short service to the people of this province who look to us, yes, for leader-

ship. The government has the right to pass legislation as a majority, but they have the responsibility to listen. What this member was saying is that if you're confident about what you're doing, send it to committee so that people can have their say and they can be heard.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to join the debate today to support my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in his quest to make sure that we have a more effective and efficient Toronto city council, denoting the fact that we have made promises on this side of the House to streamline government and to cut the cost of government. We have a very clear mandate from the people.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Crystal clear.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Of course it's crystal clear. We have a clear mandate.

If the three liberal parties on the other side of the House want to continue to oppose the legislation that we bring forward, that's up to the three liberal parties on the other side of the House. But I can tell you, on June 7, the people of Toronto, the people of Ottawa, the people of Ontario gave a crystal clear mandate to this party and to Premier Ford. They said, "We expect you to make sure that we have more efficient and cost-effective government."

Unfortunately, the other three parties, the three liberal parties over there, want to continue to claim that there's chaos down at Toronto city hall. They want to continue to claim there's chaos in our education system. They want to continue to claim there's chaos elsewhere. But the fact remains, we have a strong mandate to do what we're doing.

If the liberal parties—the NDP, the Greens and the real Liberal Party that has seven people—I lent them my minivan, by the way, so they can have their caucus meetings in it. But the fact of the matter remains. We have a mandate. The Premier of Ontario has been very clear that he has had a desire to have 25 city councillors in the city of Toronto for a very long time. It's not a secret. It's not something he has never spoken about. It's something he actually did when he was at city hall as a Toronto city councillor.

Interjection.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the member from Timmins chirping about the size of the city of Toronto's council, but I've got to tell you something. Our Premier actually stood in Toronto city hall as an elected official there, and he has a mandate from the people of this province to pursue his changes.

I'll just say to the former third party that voted for 97% of the initiatives by the previous Liberal government that you guys were rejected soundly and very clearly on June 7.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Mr. Speaker, I want to give an example of the kinds of individuals who are concerned

by the government's decision to slash city council here and also to eliminate the Peel election in the region of Peel.

We have here Mandeep Kaur from Scarborough, a resident of Scarborough, an amazing organizer and contributor to her community. She sits on the board of Seva Food Bank, an amazing board which is giving back to people in the Peel region. She lives in Scarborough and commutes to Toronto every day. She is what I like to consider an amazing, close friend of mine, but beyond that, someone who is active and involved in her community. She is concerned about the reduction of city council and its size.

I'm also joined by Baldeep Singh, a creative, an entrepreneur, someone who is always engaging with young people, who has become a role model for so many individuals. A resident of Mississauga, he's concerned about the elimination of the chair in Peel.

These are the kinds of individuals who are concerned about these undemocratic decisions to reduce council, to eliminate these positions and disengage people from getting involved in the electoral system, disengage individuals who have been knocking on doors, who have been fundraising, who had registered in a variety of places. We have candidates across the board who have been knocking on doors and getting organized and now, all of a sudden, they have no place to door-knock. They don't know where they're door-knocking. There is unclarity. There is confusion.

Every day, Ontarians are concerned about these decisions, all the way from Scarborough to Mississauga. This is something which is giving people a sense of uncertainty. It does not put faith in our government. It puts the exact opposite of that: It puts concern; it puts confusion. That's not the kind of steady hand we need to put faith back into people's minds. That's what they look at when they think of government. They look at stability; they look at confidence. The government right now, the Conservative government, is not presenting that to the people of Ontario. All we're going to do is hurt our reputation and hurt our ability to serve our community.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now return to the member for Kitchener Centre for final comments.

Hon. John Yakabuski: You're not Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I'm Kitchener Centre.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Are you?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I'm totally Kitchener Centre.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Don't worry; we'll all give her a hand for defeating Daiene Vernile.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): That's the reason why I'm here and you're there.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I wanted to say thank you to all of the members who participated in this debate and I wanted to share a teaching that I learned from Dr. Phil. Dr. Phil says that when you say to somebody, "La la la la, but," you've actually dismissed everything that they just said. Unfortunately, I feel that from the government side of the House it was kind of one of those "but" moments.

The concern that I have is that I was being really serious and candid about what leadership can look like, and instead of being heard, I was critiqued. I was told that it was "holier than thou" speak. My experience isn't holier than thou; it's my experience. So I'm going to take a step back and make a suggestion to the government, which they can take or not.

I'm going to take a step back and suggest that when they do receive the 13, 14 or 15 millions of people who start to critique what they're doing, they don't start off their comments back with, "But you're being holier than thou, because you don't believe what I'm saying." Leadership is trying to figure out why they're coming from the place that they are, meeting them where they're at, having, as my colleague has said, a steady hand, and being there to hold them and explain to them what it is that's happening.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank all members for their active participation in debate this afternoon, but it is now 6 o'clock and this House will stand adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1757.

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Chris Glover, Christine Hogarth
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**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
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**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
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Michael Coteau, Mike Harris
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Jim McDonnell, Norman Miller
Suze Morrison, Michael Parsa
Peggy Sattler, Kinga Surma
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
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Mike Harris, Randy Hillier
Mitzie Hunter, Laura Mae Lindo
Paul Miller, Billy Pang
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Michael Gravelle, Joel Harden
Belinda Karahalios, Robin Martin
Sheref Sabawy, Nina Tangri
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